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# BRANCH LIBRARIES

Modern Problems and Administration

by

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L O N D O N

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This book is Dedicated  
to the many Branch Librarians  
and Branch Staffs with whom it  
has been my privilege to work  
during Thirty-Eight and more years  
in Kensington, Fulham, and Croydon.



# GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

by W. E. DOUBLEDAY, HON. F.L.A.

THIS new Series of Handbooks is intended to supplement the larger Manuals issued by Messrs. Allen & Unwin and the Library Association under the title of *The Library Association Series of Library Manuals*.

There are some aspects of Library Work which, although by no means unimportant, are of themselves insufficient to require a full-sized manual, and there are other phases which in a comprehensive textbook of manageable dimensions could be dealt with only in a general way. The Handbooks will adequately cover these subjects and will also treat of certain special topics which hitherto have escaped the attention which they deserve, or which—owing to recent developments—demand reconsideration.

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## P R E F A C E

THE removal of the old rate-limit of 1d. in the £, effected by the Act of 1919, has been followed by a remarkable development in public library practice and administration, and nowhere has this been more marked than in branch libraries. Not only has their number been largely increased, but many have been remodelled or rebuilt, and with the notable increase of their users new problems of management and technique have arisen.

It is the purpose of this Handbook to survey these problems and to show how the new requirements are being met. It makes but little attempt to describe those fundamental details of routine which remain wholly or largely unchanged; but on the other hand it concerns itself deeply with the changed and changing aspect of Branch Library policy and administration, and describes and discusses methods and principles which have recently been tried out and approved in municipal libraries of small and large library systems in different parts of the kingdom. It may fairly claim to embody the results of long personal experience and extensive investigations in this increasingly important field of library work.

Librarians are generous in imparting the results of their own experience, and I am grateful to many for information which is incorporated in the follow-

ing pages. In particular I have to acknowledge my indebtedness to Messrs. R. Butchart (Edinburgh), T. E. Callander (Coulsdon and Purley), H. M. Cashmore (Birmingham), R. J. Gordon (Leeds), J. P. Lamb (Sheffield), Duncan Gray (Nottingham), J. G. O'Leary (Dagenham), E. A. Savage (Edinburgh), my own chief, W. C. Berwick Sayers, R. Wright (Middlesex County), J. F. Smith (Liverpool), The Library Association, and Dr. E. E. Lowe (Leicester), for material assistance rendered either by their writings or in conversation or by correspondence in the preparation of this book. I must also acknowledge my many obligations to the branch librarians whose work it is my own duty to supervise. My colleague, Mr. Haynes-Bath, has been particularly helpful with criticisms and suggestions, and I gladly take this opportunity of recording my thanks to him for his numerous and long-continued kindnesses. I have learned much from him in connection with branch library administration.

HENRY A. SHARP

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# BRANCH LIBRARIES

## CHAPTER I

### GENERAL PROBLEMS

THE 1927 *Report on Public Libraries in England and Wales* had some significant observations to offer with regard to branch libraries, and since that time nothing has been more remarkable amid all the developments in the library world than the changes which have been made, and are still being effected, in respect of these important auxiliaries to the central library. It is, indeed, scarcely too much to say that they have entered upon a new phase of existence. During the last decade in particular urban and rural social conditions have materially altered. Under town-planning schemes or by individual enterprise vast new suburbs have sprung up on every side; the density of population is no longer what it was, and whilst commerce has increasingly invaded old residential centres the inhabitants have been driven out to less congested parts. The reading habit has since the War enormously increased, and, whilst book issues have been advancing, old branch libraries have been undergoing adaptation and enlargement and entirely new ones have been erected. Library authorities have, under these circumstances, been com-

pelled to review their policy; numbers of new branches have come into existence under the fresh conditions, and their planning, equipment, administration, and technique have of late been considerably revised—routine perhaps to a less extent than others, though there, also, have advances been made.

In the following pages these and other problems will be considered in the light of past experience, and recent and current attempts to achieve a branch library service which shall best meet the requirements of the present day, and a glance at the list of chapter-headings will reveal something of the scope of the book.

"No two towns," as the 1927 *Report* (Cmd. 2868) pertinently observed, "are alike in respect of their physical configuration, the extent and distribution of their population, the means of communication between their centres and outlying districts, and their library resources. . . . But in considering the various forms of library extensions it is important to note a feature common to all towns, namely, the limited area within which the central library usually affords general and efficient service. Beyond that area branch libraries, delivery stations, or travelling libraries may be required to meet the needs of varying districts. The branch library is the most important form of library extension," and it remains so still.

The problem offered by these outlying libraries is at once more difficult, and yet in other ways somewhat easier, than it was in pre-War days, for under the limi-

tations of the old penny rate library finances were so utterly strained and restricted that many of the smaller authorities could with difficulty maintain a single library efficiently. Those of medium size provided two or three branches at a great distance from the central library, whilst only the very large cities like Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, or Glasgow could afford to provide branches on a reasonable scale.

Croydon may perhaps be cited as a typical example of a larger library system of the middle group, and until the War it had a central library, two branches of its own and one jointly with an adjoining district. Within five years five additional branches have been added with a large number of deposit libraries in schools, clubs, hospitals and other institutions, and more are now envisaged. A similar process is operating all over the country and scarcely a month goes by without the opening of some new branch.

The question of large *versus* small branch libraries has latterly come very much to the fore, and the general tendency appears to be to place a library more or less upon everybody's doorstep. This policy is sound enough economics upon the whole, and many authorities and librarians regard it as sound and necessary common-sense. Each district has its own shopping centre, its own churches, its own schools, and its own open space; why, then, should a public library be the one amenity to be distinguished by its scarcity?

But, at the same time, there must be displayed a

spirit of reasonableness, for money is not too easily obtained for library purposes and the burden of the rates is not to be ignored. Library authorities will no doubt see that districts are not *overloaded* by a multiplicity of small libraries, and that while possessing many book-distributing agencies there is perhaps only one single building and one solitary collection of books in the whole of the town worthy of the name of a library. The twopenny chain library has done more good than it is usually credited with by rendering it unnecessary to spend overmuch of public money upon the purchase of the lighter and more ephemeral types of literature, though it has done some dis-service by creating in some minds the false impression that a library is merely an assemblage of current fiction and this not necessarily of the best.

It will be one of the objects of this handbook to show that the problem of the large industrial city differs from that of the medium-sized town of the county borough type, just as, in turn, the problem of the latter is different from that of the smaller community. Similarly, the problems of the old-fashioned town are not precisely those which confront a new community, as the example of Dagenham serves to show. In places such as Dagenham, where all the social services are comparatively new, there are no obsolete buildings to act as a drag on the wheel, and the Town Planning Act has done much to simplify many common administrative difficulties concerning social welfare. Formerly

districts grew in haphazard fashion, but now areas are reserved for industrial purposes and others for quieter residences. Moreover, local authorities now usually reserve sites for such amenities as health-centres, schools, libraries, and other services and take the precaution of securing options on sites for such uses at special prices. It is easy to ascertain which portions of new areas are likely to be developed first.

As already suggested, the present time is largely the day of the small branch library, but in amending old library systems or devising new ones due regard must be paid to the size and character of the general area: a policy which may be thoroughly sound for an average sized town may well be not so well adapted for a large city. As between the very small and the comparatively large branch it may be advisable, where circumstances warrant it, to establish the reasonably effective library of 14,000 or 16,000 volumes, situated at a distance of not less, and barely more, than two miles from the central library—provided that no geographical or artificial features interpose to an extent which vitiate that calculation. It has to be emphasized, however, that danger lurks in the laying down of any rigid rules concerning the distance allowed between one library and another. Nor can it be said with any degree of authority that a population of 25,000 or any other given number is the minimum for which a branch library should be provided: every separate district must of



necessity be more or less a law unto itself in the light of its own conditions.

As against the case for many small libraries the results of special research undertaken by Mr. E. A. Savage, the principal librarian of the Edinburgh Public Libraries, may be cited. For some years his committee had been concerned with the gradual diminution in the expenditure on book service. In 1925-26 38 per cent of its income was spent on books, binding, and periodicals, but within five years this had declined to 34 per cent, and after a further five years to 29 per cent, the fall being attributable to the growth of overhead costs and management expenses. By reviewing the expenditure and seeking to effect economies the book service was then stabilized. In 1936-37 it was 28·7 per cent, and in the following year 28·9 per cent.

The outcome of this Edinburgh enquiry was a survey of the distribution of book-borrowing from the libraries and the following conclusions were reached:

(a) "The distribution of books from the Central Library is spread so evenly over the whole city that the highest proportion of the whole issue in any one of the sixty-nine polling districts is 5·87 per cent, while the issue is negligible in only three polling districts on the extreme boundaries. . . . The Central Library is the principal store (though not the only store) of books for serious study and cultural reading. Readers and students are attracted to it from almost

all parts of the city, and especially from those districts . . . through which there are the best public transport facilities. The Central Library serves the suburbs as well as the centre. It is in fact the city's library, and not merely a library for the central districts.

"The Library Committee, therefore, are of opinion (i) that library development in the suburbs, however desirable, ought not to take place at the expense of the Central Library, and (ii) that the extension of new and additional housing will increase the demands upon the Central Library for books of educational value. People now living under the better conditions of the newly-built areas demand from the Central Library good books in numbers far in excess of the demand from the congested central areas ten years ago. . . .

(b) "The survey also proved that a large branch library, in a sub-centre of shopping, and on or near radial and circumferential transport routes, is a more efficient agency for the distribution of books than a number of smaller, more localized libraries which are intended to do work equal to that of the larger library. The large library is more economical in oncost. Educationally it is more efficient. It has a stronger attraction for a longer time because it offers a greater variety of choice from its larger bookstock.

(c) "It was ascertained from the survey that the large branch library serves a greater suburban area with more efficiency if it is situated in a sub-centre of shopping about half-way between the boundary

and the centre. Citizens habitually travel into town for service; rarely in the other direction. Within reason, therefore, the greater the number of people living on the outward side of a branch the more numerous are the readers using it. Even when a branch library is highly efficient nearly all the people living between it and the centre of the city prefer to use the Central Library. It follows that any large branch, in a sub-centre of shopping which is about halfway between centre and boundary, is a more efficient distributor of books both in its immediate locality and in the large suburban area between it and the boundary. It also serves more effectively to relieve the Central Library, which is heavily burdened with demands.

"The general conclusion from the survey is that the citizens are best served by a central library and a few large, conveniently-situated branch libraries with good stocks of books and competent librarians. No other policy leads to the same standard of efficiency except at heavier cost for the whole service. The greater the number of special distributing agencies the greater the oncost charges, and the more difficult the superintendence."

The foregoing passages have been abstracted from Mr. Savage's Annual Report, but the results of his study have appeared in enlarged form in the *Library Association Record* for April 1937. There may be certain towns faced with branch library problems to which

his arguments would not wholly apply, but none the less it is a most thought-provoking contribution to the subject and perhaps the more so because it strikes at the very root of some of the most cherished ideas for branch provision, formulated before the days of town-planning and spread-out populations.

Mr. Savage points out, for instance, that "the common method of scribing a circle round the site of a branch to mark the area served by it is wrong." By a check of the entire issue on a given day he has shown that "the area of greatest density of borrowing from a branch library is on the landward, not the townward side of a branch." He cites the case of his Morningside Branch, which is equipped to attract borrowers from the whole of the neighbourhood, and finds that the heaviest borrowings are by readers from the suburban side. "Citizens," he proceeds, "habitually travel to the centre for service; rarely outward. . . . Even when one branch stands between the Central and another branch still farther out, borrowing from the intermediate branch is heavier by readers living beyond it than by those living between it and the centre."

It is sometimes argued that if new branches are established to any extent the issues from the central library will decline. If this were so the argument would ultimately carry us to the point where by the provision of such libraries the issues from the central library would decrease to an extent which would reduce it to the status of a branch for residents in its immediate

vicinity. When the number of branches in Croydon was increased it was anticipated that the demands upon the central library would be materially diminished, but they did not, nor have they done so in Edinburgh, or, for that matter, in other places, and Mr. Savage advances this significant reason: "In Edinburgh the ranks of readers who transfer from central to branch have been filled always by other readers who hitherto have not been satisfied. As long as Central has been maintained at something like its proper standard the issue of books from it has not been lowered by the opening of branches."

One may go so far as to say that the first essential for a successful library system is a well-planned, well-stocked, and well-manned central library with adequate stock accommodation, part of which is used for a large and acceptable book-pool from which branches can be constantly refreshed and augmented.

#### NUMBER OF BRANCHES

If anyone takes up this book and tries to find an answer to the question: how many branches should a town of any given number of thousands of people, of any particular acreage, or of a certain rateable value have, and what size shall they be, he is likely to be disappointed. And for this reason. The number of branches and their size necessary to give a community an efficient and adequate library service

depends on other factors besides numbers, acreage, and wealth.

The shape and configuration of the area play important parts in the problem; some towns and cities are very much more compact units than others. Transport facilities and traffic conditions also have a bearing on the problem, and in these days of co-operation there is the question of willingness to establish joint libraries, or better still to admit outside residents to membership. A busy main or arterial road which it is dangerous for old people and young children to cross often proves a dividing line between the areas served by two branches. And in new suburban districts there is the element of snobbery to be reckoned with, which by the way has some bearing on the names chosen for the designation of branch buildings. The term "central library" is usually above all class distinction because it conveys nothing more to the average borrower than that it is the "big" library, but a certain branch may be associated with streets or districts that are taboo to people living within easy distance, but who would not willingly resort to the district served by that branch, certainly not to borrow books.

I have never heard of it being tried in this country, but it would be interesting to see what would be the effect of adopting the Christian Science Church idea of numbering branches instead of naming them, as First Branch, Second Branch, and so on.

But to revert to the question of numbers. Here for

what it is worth follows a list of twenty-five cities and towns, with the number of libraries in each. London is purposely omitted, largely because in nearly all the metropolitan boroughs the problem of branches has been more or less satisfactorily determined already: at any rate, as far as number is concerned. Most of them are in urgent need of pulling down and rebuilding

	Number of Libraries	Population	Rateable Value	Area
			£	Acres
Glasgow .. ..	27	1,088,461	11,013,167	30,046
Birmingham ..	30	1,043,000	7,027,859	51,147
Liverpool .. ..	26	856,072	6,694,468	27,321
Manchester .. .	31	766,378	6,661,545	27,255
Sheffield .. ..	11	518,200	3,159,511	39,596
Leeds .. .. .	15	489,800	3,597,891	38,300
Edinburgh .. .	13	439,010	5,690,150	32,402
Bristol .. .. .	16	397,012	3,245,247	24,381
Bradford .. ..	32	298,041	2,186,958	25,514
Newcastle - upon - Tyne .. .. .	7	283,145	2,593,709	11,401
Nottingham .. .	10	281,850	2,006,618	16,166
Portsmouth .. .	6	252,421	1,864,298	9,223
Croydon .. .. .	8	241,739	2,341,629	12,632
Cardiff .. .. .	11	223,648	1,873,751	13,628
Bolton .. .. .	10	177,250	1,065,251	15,279
Coventry .. ..	11	167,046	1,378,430	19,167
Brighton .. ..	5	146,900	1,840,148	12,565
East Ham .. ..	4	142,934	761,575	3,326
Southend .. ..	4	136,000	1,500,577	10,284
Norwich .. .. .	4	126,236	740,527	7,923
Bournemouth ..	7	116,797	1,854,376	11,627
Dagenham .. ..	4	89,362	532,655	6,728
Eastbourne .. .	4	57,435	855,399	6,847
Watford .. .. .	2	56,805	577,577	5,275
Coulsdon & Purley	5	39,795	678,815	11,142

on modern lines. It should be pointed out, however, that in many if not in all of the cases cited, still more branches may be envisaged.

An examination of the table will show that there is a wide variation in the number of libraries existing in communities of apparently similar common factors, and yet there are doubtless reasons why, say Bolton, with a population of 177,250 possesses three more libraries than Newcastle-upon-Tyne with one of 283,145, or why Coulsdon and Purley with a population of only 39,795 has one more than Norwich with its population of 126,236, or even than East Ham with a population of 142,934.

The obvious thing to say is that one community is more library-minded than another, which may or may not be true in some instances but cannot be laid down as a universal fact. What, then, *is* to determine the number of libraries in any town to provide an adequate service? There is but one answer to this question and that is—local conditions. Nevertheless some suggestions may be adventured.

A long and narrow town will require to be treated differently from a squarish one with a similar population, because the centre in the latter can be more easily reached. Some towns, again, have a common centre to which the inhabitants mostly come whether to work, to shop, or to be entertained. Others may be divided into more or less “watertight compartments,” possibly by class or occupational distinctions,



each possessing its own business and other centres and to some extent being self-contained. Elsewhere a district may be severed from the local centre of activities by a railway, river, or canal, in which case direct access thereto is apt to be impeded. Factors like these have to be reckoned with, as also do administrative districts which cover extended areas. It is for causes such as these that the area over which the Coulsdon and Purley Urban District Council rules requires five libraries in order to meet the needs of a population less than that normally served by a single library.

To demonstrate the extent to which opinions differ as to the number of branches necessary to supply a city adequately, Mr. Savage, in the article already referred to, goes so far as to say that if he were commencing a library service for Edinburgh he would recommend two libraries only, one as the chief library of 250,000 volumes and the other a branch of 100,000, both stocked with books wholly available for home-reading, and with only about a mile-and-a-third between them. His theory is that small libraries become necessary when large libraries are not sufficiently large and are not so conveniently situated as they might be. He avers that "the popularity of the small library can be maintained only by ample supplies of fiction. We stoop to pander. The larger the library the fewer is the number of novels required to retain the public favour; with two great home-reading libraries . . . no fiction other than that referred to in histories of

literature would be necessary to attract readers." Not all would go so far as that, but it suggests a line of thought and the need for considering just how far it is desirable to go either in limiting or extending the housing and scope of our book-stocks.

### JOINT LIBRARIES

Reference has been made earlier to joint libraries. Now a joint library is not exactly a branch. It is in fact usually a self-contained library controlled by a separate committee of representatives from the two authorities who have provided it and who contribute equally towards its maintenance. It is designed to serve the people who live in the more or less far corners of two library districts, the population of which scarcely justifies the erection of two branch buildings, one on each side of the boundary.

There may be circumstances in which a joint library can be justified, but on the whole, judging by the several examples I have had opportunities of studying, the solution it seeks to provide is not altogether a happy one. The librarian lacks the status and the salary of a chief librarian, disagreements are liable to arise as to the amounts that shall be voted for its upkeep, one or other of the librarians on either side of the boundary may begrudge the money that has to go towards its maintenance, possibly reducing the sum that might in his opinion be usefully spent on his own

system; readers are sometimes restricted in the use of their tickets to the joint library while their neighbours have the resources of an entire library system at their disposal, and can requisition a book from any part of it.

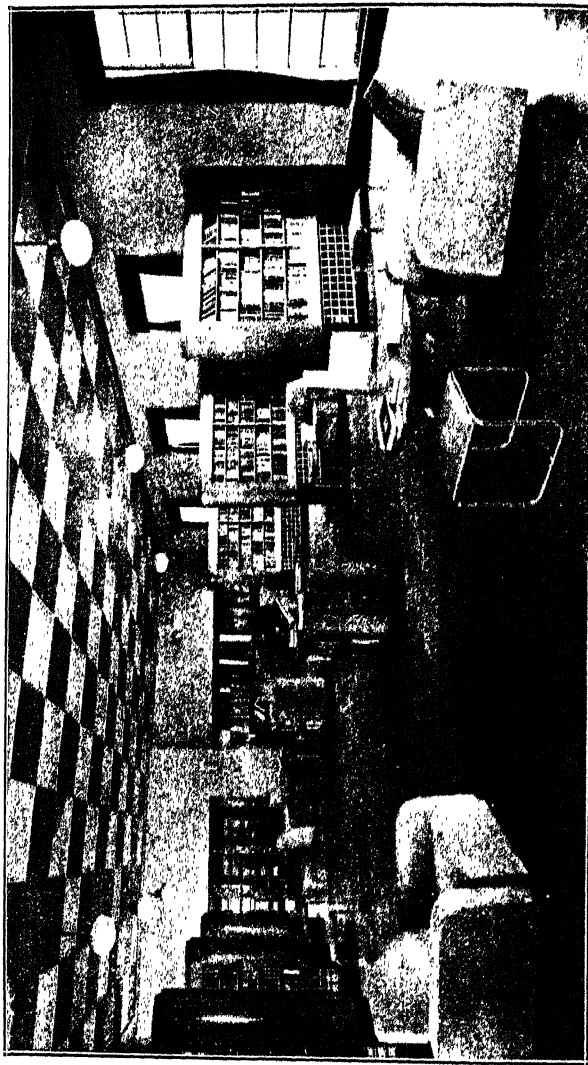
With the present-day tendency to provide more branches a better method when boundaries meet at places where the people in one library district do their shopping, take their 'bus or their tram, or even get their entertainment in the other, is to allow the unrestricted use of tickets at the most convenient branch, in whichever district that may be. Mitcham and Croydon have had an arrangement of this kind for some years, and it has worked satisfactorily. Many of the County libraries have likewise been able to abolish artificial boundaries, the task being simpler as all the money comes from one authority, the County Council.

A modification of this plan has been recently arrived at in the case of Coulsdon and Purley and Croydon. There are a certain number of roads which, while being within the borough of Croydon belong naturally to Purley. These people are allowed to use the quite near-by Purley branch, and in return Purley readers who can satisfy their chief librarian that their reading interests would be helped if they could have access to Croydon's older and larger stock of standard books that would not find a place in a new library system like that of Coulsdon and Purley, may be granted the free use of the Croydon Public Libraries.



BECONTREE BRANCH, DAGENHAM

[Chief Librarian, Dagenham]



*County Librarian, Lancashire*

**A TYPICAL COUNTY BRANCH**

**The Litherland Branch, Lancashire County Libraries, serving a town of 19,000.**

## COST

A question that is bound to arise in connexion with the erection of any branch library is—how much is it going to cost? In former days this was a comparatively simple question to answer, for one branch was very much like another; we had not reached the stage of difference that shows itself to-day when an examination of recent professional journals shows that a branch may be had for anything from £1,000 or so up to £16,000 and more. As proof of the absurdity of attempting to lay down any hard and fast rules as to what a branch should cost, and of how varied the costs are, it is shown in the recent Library Association's *Survey of Libraries* that in one area they range, in the case of new branches, from £1,000 to £15,000, and in another from £4,000 to £20,000.

Obviously there must be wide differences in size as well as in materials and other points, and the question immediately recurs as to whether many small libraries are likely to be more successful than a few large ones.

As in every other controversial question, there are things to be said on both sides. The small branch of 5,000 or so volumes reproduced many times over has the advantage of providing a library service for everybody, while the larger one in turn gives a considerably wider choice of books, and is probably more economical

to run from both the staff and the overhead charges points of view.

In *A plea for small branch libraries* (L.A.R., November 1936), Wm. B. Harris, of Plymouth, cites the case of two libraries built for the same town. One involved a capital cost of £12,000, and an annual upkeep cost of £2,011, had a book stock of 8,000, and issued 150,000 volumes in a single year. The other involved a capital expenditure of only £1,400 and an annual upkeep of £1,100, had a stock of 6,500, and issued 130,000 volumes in a year. The first has a separate children's room, reading room, and lending library; the second does all its work in a single room, and yet the net result is not so very different, or at all events apparent. But to argue that any small library can do the work of a large one is obviously fallacious.

It is usual for new branches to be built out of a loan, and on the whole the practice doubtless has much to commend it for it passes on part of the cost to those who will enjoy their facilities in years to come. But care must be taken to see that the total amount annually incurred for the repayment of loans does not pile itself up and assume proportions that seriously reduce the sum of money left over to cover the running expenses of the entire system.

To avoid doing this, Dagenham has recently built a very attractive branch described on page 123, out of its current revenue. It cost £5,200, houses 12,000 books, and has accommodation for reading and reference

work for children and for adults. It is a simple building consisting of one room and the usual "offices." Coventry, too, has just built a very nice-looking branch for £2,425 out of revenue.

The idea has something to commend it in view of the opinion of modern librarians that a library building becomes obsolete in about twenty years. How many library authorities to-day are suffering through having to carry on their work in branches that were too well built forty or more years ago?

Far better is it to spend £5,000 on a building that will efficiently and attractively serve its day and immediate generation than to spend £15,000 on one with which the community may have to remain content for many years after it has ceased to give good service. It has too often been overlooked that a branch library is not like a cathedral, a city hall, or even a central library, any of which could, with some truth, be expected to provide a good and lasting example of the architecture of its day.



## CHAPTER II

### PLANNING

It scarcely falls within the scope of the present volume to enter upon a comprehensive discussion of the principles of library planning. Speaking in general terms these principles are the same whether for a central or a branch library, but with obvious modifications respecting such items as the height of bookcases, the width of gangways, floor surfaces, the area of accommodation likely to be required, natural and artificial lighting, heating systems, and the like. Yet there are features peculiar to branches and these must be borne in mind, nor can the foregoing matters be entirely dismissed from these pages despite their general application.

### ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

A few words at the beginning about architectural style may not be out of place, and most will agree that a good-looking building must add materially to the esteem in which the library itself will be held. We do not need to be reminded that the ultimate test of a good library is the stock of books which the ordered pile of bricks and masonry contains, but a small proportion only of the public will realize that fact unless

and until they can be persuaded to pass within the library portals. There is no better way of ensuring this than by giving them a creditable threshold to cross, though it need neither be extravagant nor ornate.

*The Architect and Building News*<sup>1</sup> has passed some scathing remarks upon the architecture of small library buildings. "Public library building," it said, "is one of the first special duties of architecture and one of the most neglected. Dozens of small libraries are built each year of which only a few deserve a moment's attention for their architectural qualities. This is not merely because many (perhaps most) of the smaller libraries are built without architects, but because so few of the architects who are lucky enough to have to build libraries know anything about the library service, and because even fewer librarians and the committee men behind them know anything about architecture or have ever begun to think what contribution good building could make to the value of their libraries."

This is a severe indictment. It is, however, not wholly applicable to some of the really good-looking branch libraries which have been erected during recent years, although alas! some structures resemble sheds and are utterly unfit to have the honour of housing the finest literature of the world.

Anyhow, exclaims the critic of library expenditure,

<sup>1</sup> June 28, 1936.

architecturally designed libraries are expensive, and even extravagant. Apropos of the reference to *The Architect* it may be mentioned that Coulsdon and Purley built four new libraries in 1936 for £12,000, and they are regarded by those who have seen them as good examples of library architecture, and £12,000, which includes furniture but is exclusive of the cost of sites, is scarcely extravagant. The utilitarian character of the Coulsdon branch is remarkable. To all appearances it is a well-finished building, but reference to the plan shows that it is actually unfinished, allowance being made at the rear for a large open-access lending department with radially-planned book-cases. The reading room is ultimately to extend to the space now occupied by the staff, who are to have a complete new wing of their own. A plea that it is intended only to erect something that will serve a temporary purpose forms no real excuse for a bad-looking building.

#### TYPES OF BRANCHES

The terminology of librarianship has within memory undergone great change, but in no aspect has this been more marked than with regard to branch libraries. Up to the post-war period one knew fairly well what to expect when visiting a branch library or reading of one newly opened. They were usually much of a size, having similar departments—a newsroom, a

magazine room, a lending library, sometimes a reference room, and generally poor office accommodation. Very few had stackrooms, junior libraries, meeting-rooms, or staff-rooms. Artistic furnishing and attractive decoration were almost unknown.

But to-day a branch may be something big or small, serving many thousands of people or merely a few hundreds. In general terms a branch library may be defined as any organized and professionally-staffed collection of books deemed necessary for augmenting the service at a central library. It may be useful to enumerate some of the forms which a branch library may take.

There is, first, what is called the regional library - an American idea appropriate only to larger cities or, better still, to English counties. It is a kind of super branch, a cross between the central library and an ordinary branch. It has a good and fairly large working collection of reference books, a pool of lending books as well as its own stock; it acts as a sort of "mother" to the group of smaller branch libraries around it. It serves as a clearing-house between the smaller branches and the central library. The chief librarian exercises a certain amount of supervision over them, and coordinates the entire system.

Next comes the orthodox branch designed to meet the needs of a definitely defined area of a city or a town. It may be larger or smaller according to local circumstances, the scheme of branch libraries en-

visaged by the library authorities to-day exhibiting a tendency to build more of them smaller. In large cities this type may be related to the regional branch as just referred to.

The term is now dying out in its former significance, but there are still Deposit Stations in connexion with most county and some urban library systems. Boxes of books are sent to a village hall or school, the whole system of school libraries, collections of books in shops, clubs, hospitals and other institutions being all in the nature of deposit stations, the books being merely deposited for a limited time.

The Delivery Station as a centre to which specific books are delivered and from which they are distributed is another variation of the branch library and it is fast dying out, its place having been taken by the automobile book van which has in some counties been brought to perfection so far as such a restricted method of book distribution can be held to justify that term.

A type of branch library which has not been developed in this country to the extent that it has in the United States or Canada is the store library which is nothing more or less than a shop with windows retained for display purposes. Two good examples I have seen in Chicago and in Toronto. The first occupied an extensive corner site in the main shopping district of the suburb, and it convinced me of its value as an advertising medium. Not only were the windows

dressed with interesting exhibits and book-displays, but one could see through them into the library itself. The other I first saw by night from a street car; the blaze of light issuing from its windows was sufficiently effective to put the adjoining shops into the shade.

But apart from its advertising value, which is incidental, the real value of the store library seems to lie in the facility with which it can give temporary library service until the final requirements of a district can be more accurately assessed. The obstacle to this particular type of library is probably to be found in the high rental that would be charged for a suitable shop in a suitable position, which might, indeed, approximate to the sum which would suffice to defray the loan charges on an orthodox building.

During recent years there have been many experiments made in what are known as "unit" or "one-roomed" libraries. Observation of four of these has convinced me that they are a complete success in widely differing districts. The idea is that by erecting a unit at a time, on the principle of the expanding bookcase, it is possible to provide districts with a library service simultaneously for less than the cost of a single large-sized branch of the normal kind. With sufficient land reserved such a unit may be extended later as circumstances require. Moreover, in the view of some leading experts this is the only satisfactory and practical way of planning for the future.

## DEPARTMENTS

The customary departments of a modern public library include a reference library, a lending department, study rooms, a newspaper room, a reading room, a junior library, a lecture hall, a workroom, staff-rooms, and various offices, and possibly a stack.

The extent to which these features are to be reproduced in a branch building must depend upon a variety of circumstances: the size of the area to be covered; its distance from the central library or from some larger branch; the class of residents to be served, and similar considerations. There is still prevalent an idea that a central library must have every department that tradition has prescribed and that it must be, so to speak, the show-place of the system. There must be, for instance, a large children's room there even though most of the children live away from such a centre and would be better served by having better accommodation provided in their own district. On the other hand there is no doubt that the needs of students engaged in definite research are best served by having the reference library at such a centre, although as indicated elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> this does not absolve the authority from the duty of providing small working collections of everyday reference books at their branches, housed in a separate albeit small room. These need not be given the grandiose name of reference library:

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 108-110.

something akin to "Room for quiet reading" would be more appropriate. If by reason of restricted space or dearth of funds to provide a separate study room, it is not practical to make such accommodation, then the case for a room for quiet reading becomes more urgent, especially in these days of radio and other distractions which often make it impossible to study at home.

As to the newsroom, this is a very old and a very vexed question. It may be argued that if the people who can use the central library have one, why should those who live on the outskirts be deprived of it? One thing, however, seems clear from observations taken in new districts where it was thought people would flock to see the newspapers: there is no longer the same case for such provision that there once was. Ingenious attractions on the part of newspaper managements, such as insurance schemes, the wireless news service, the unemployment exchanges, are only three factors contributing to the case for fewer newsrooms.

Anyhow, most librarians have their own strong views either for or against newsrooms, and will doubtless recommend their inclusion or omission accordingly. There is an old adage to the effect that it is one thing to withhold the bone from the dog but quite another to attempt to take it away once he has tasted it, which just about sums up the newsroom problem. If a library has one, it would be difficult



to take it away: if there is none, few people will miss it.

If there is to be one, let it be as comfortable and pleasant as the other rooms, for the measure of respect a room receives is largely governed by its meanness or otherwise. Except for the chairs it will cost no more to allow people to sit and read in comfort than to make them stand up to do it; it has the advantage of avoiding overcrowding at the stands and those troublesome arguments that arise through two or three people trying to read the same paper simultaneously.

The slopes should be set at a sufficient angle (60 degrees) to prevent the papers from sagging, and the lower edge should be low enough to permit the top of a paper to be read easily, say twenty-four inches from the floor. If money permits, individually operated slopes each balanced on a swivel may be provided, but experience with both forms suggests that the considerable extra expenditure involved is not really necessary.

Periodicals, whether displayed in the newsroom, in a separate reading room or on tables in the lending library, are another story, and every branch should include some sort of accommodation for them.

The questions to which most serious attention should be addressed in the planning of new branches are undoubtedly those of the lending library and the junior library. The second can only be answered satisfactorily by a careful investigation into the extent of the

child population, which varies greatly in different districts of the same town. Reference is made in Chapter V to recent experience at Croydon in this connexion. In a very few districts a corner of the lending library may suffice, but in most it is imperative to provide a separate room, not necessarily because the presence of large numbers of children in the adult library would be a nuisance, but because by sheer numbers they are entitled to adequate provision quite as much as are their parents, and this aspect of our work is generally regarded as among the most important we do.

Let it be a room really planned for children; light, airy, attractively decorated, with low book-cases, plenty of screens for picture and poster displays, racks for book displays, a few nice pictures, comfortable chairs, and tables of suitable heights for younger as well as for older children, and if it can be made to look out on a bit of green lawn, all the better.

With regard to the lending library, let it be as large as the site permits, with as much floor space as possible for chairs and tables, display stands, etc. The old idea of getting the public in and out of the place as quickly as we can is dying: it is dead in the most successful library systems. The more informality it is possible to suggest the better, a feature which can be still further developed by greater and more individualistic attention to the decoration scheme, which, while not being garish or ornate, should be at least attractive. Choose

a different colour scheme from that in, say, the junior library or the reading room; in fact, let every room be different.

Whether a library has lectures or not is a question of general library administration, but serious consideration may well be given to the provision in branches, if not of an actual lecture hall at any rate of some sort of a meeting room which can be used partly for library functions like wireless discussion groups and reading circles, lent, or let at reasonable fees to local societies, with a view to centering in the library as much as possible of the cultural and even recreational life of the district, using both words in a very broad sense, and embracing, for example, the many groups that now exist for the study of present-day economic and political problems. This is perhaps especially important in new areas where societies are often hard put to it to find suitable meeting accommodation.

Authorities who are concerned with the planning of new branches should have in mind the question of increasing leisure and consider carefully whether it is not their duty, as it is certainly their great opportunity, to make some useful contribution to this social problem.

Omission to provide reasonable staff accommodation, whether for work, meals, or rest, is not unknown to branch libraries, yet such provision is as necessary there as at a central library. It is common for routine

work to be performed at the public counter during slack times, but it is better for it to be done in a workroom whenever possible.

Owing to staff limitations it is not invariably practicable to leave the building for meals, especially tea; but so long as this unhappy restriction remains facilities for meals should be afforded and the reasonable time so occupied should be regarded as time worked. There should be electric or gas points and the necessary apparatus for making tea and the preparation of simple meals. A supply of hot water for washing and cleaning is also essential, and, of course, proper sanitary accommodation, separately for the two sexes if mixed staffs are employed. Appropriate crockery-ware, storage accommodation, and a table and chairs will naturally be required, and comfortable varieties of the latter should not be regarded as a luxury.

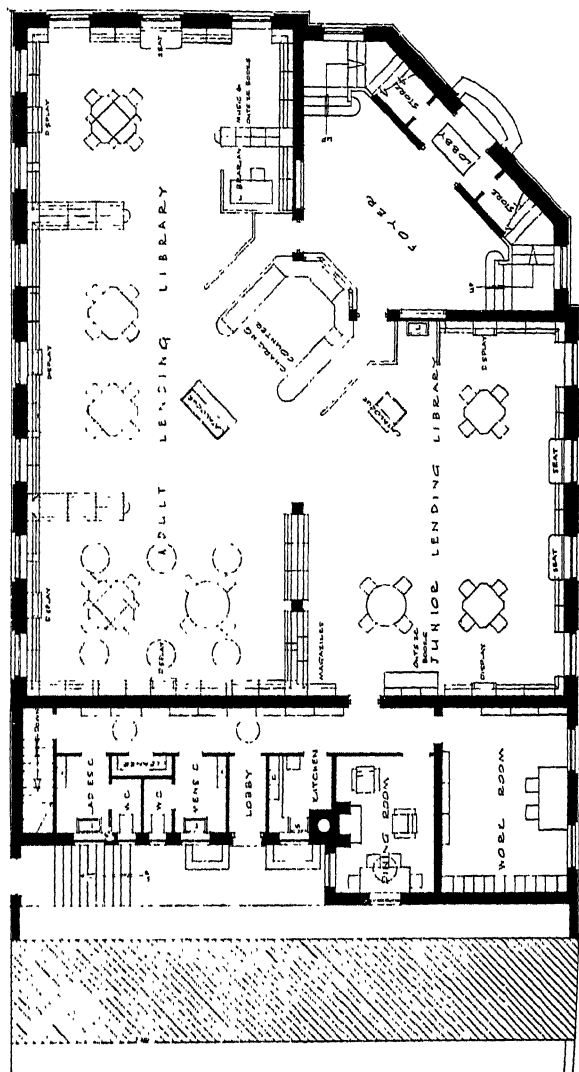
#### LIGHTING AND HEATING

With regard to natural lighting there is one warning that seems to be called for. This is a day when light goes hand-in-hand with cleanliness for proximity to godliness, but there is perhaps a tendency to overdo it with the result that staffs come perilously near to being prostrated by heat in summertime. Certainly all the natural light that can be gained should be admitted, but in the estimates let there be earmarked a sum of money sufficient to provide effective blinds or curtains:

this is as important for readers as for the staff, and the hint is adventured because branch libraries are often small, crowded with readers, and frequently lend themselves to much window-glass. The scanty accommodation of such buildings permits of but little, if any, relief by setting some of the very limited staff to work elsewhere within its walls.

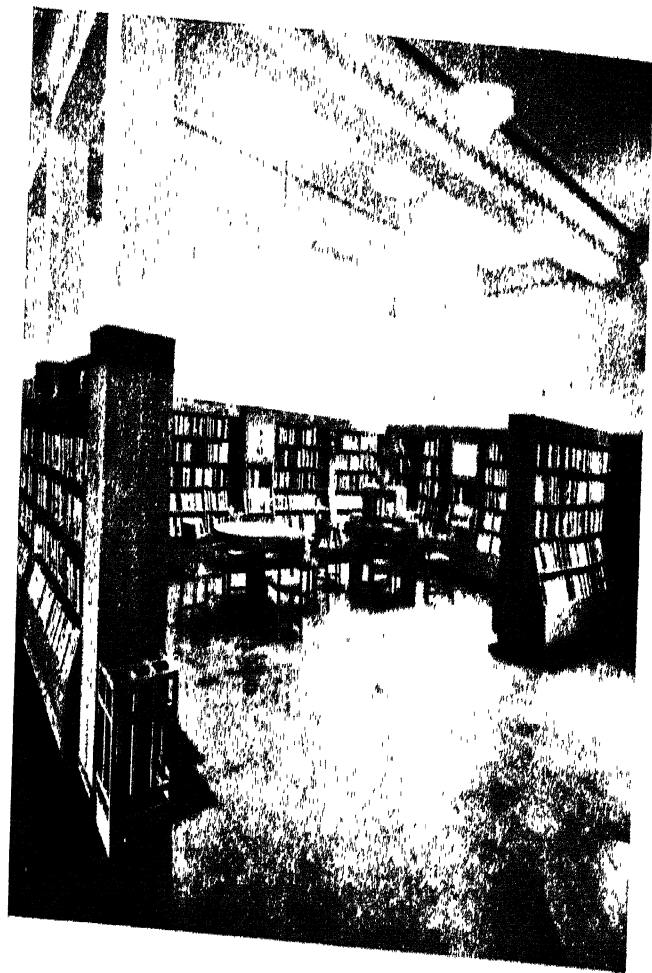
So far as artificial lighting is concerned there are books which treat of it at length, and there is always a lighting department or a qualified firm of lighting experts near who can give better and more up-to-date advice than can be offered in a book which may quickly fall at any time behind the latest advances of technical knowledge. It has also to be remembered that every separate building presents its own peculiar problems. It may, however, be observed as a general principle that whilst adequate lighting, both natural and artificial, should be secured, glare must be avoided, and it may perhaps be added that where electric light is used points should be installed for the use of a vacuum cleaner.

Heating presents its own problems and should be considered in relation to efficacy but also with regard to arrangements likely to be made for cleaning the branch. In a large central library the problem is comparatively simple, for there is usually a janitor whose duty it is to keep the furnace cleaned and stoked. On the other hand many branch libraries have no whole-time janitor, possibly none at all. In such cases—and



[Library Association

THE SHEEPSCAR BRANCH, LEEDS  
Ground Floor Plan



THE SHEEPSKAR BRANCH, LEEDS  
Lending Library

*Library Association*

in others too for that matter—consideration may well be given to modern systems of steam low-pressure boilers, oil-fires and thermostatically controlled, of gas or electricity similarly controlled. Several of the newer libraries around London have effectively and economically adopted such heating methods, and in one of the Croydon branches electricity has, within the writer's own knowledge, been thus employed with very satisfactory results. The average daily cost over six months from December to May was 4s. 11½d., at the rate of ½d. per unit. The area heated was roughly 26,000 cubic feet, the temperature maintained ranged between 60 and 65 degrees. Heat is automatically switched on and off at any time and the temperature is maintained at any desired degree. No accommodation is required for fuel; stoking and cleaning are rendered unnecessary, and altogether these devices appear to provide an excellent solution of a problem which hitherto has been troublesome. Unsightly and dust-creating radiators can be dispensed with by several alternative methods, and perhaps the most commendable idea is that by which the heat is radiated from the ceiling, as in the case of the Sheepscar branch described on page 126, at the new library at Wallington, and elsewhere.

Although, as has already been observed, the subject of the architectural planning belongs properly to the question of library planning as a whole, it may be useful here to summarize a series of what may be



termed "canons" which are more or less applicable to Branch Libraries.

*Cost.*—The service a branch can give is not necessarily in the ascendant scale according to building costs. A £3,000 branch may conceivably give as good service as one costing £5,000 or even £10,000. On the other hand it may not. Local conditions and requirements should become the deciding factor. A built-up area can take a permanent and more expensive building, whereas a partly developed one can do with the library planned for building a unit at a time. Avoid over-building if a large library service is not likely to be required for several years to come.

*Site.*—The essentials governing sites are well-known. They should be conveniently situated and yet more or less isolated, set back from the building line to permit of a distinctive setting, near a principal thoroughfare but not necessarily right on it, large enough for extension, and possessing natural light facilities on as many sides as possible.

Extensive new housing areas should have sites allocated for library purposes at the time of the lay-out of the area, in common with other social services.

*Height.*—Most branches are single storied, and it is generally convenient that at least all the public rooms shall be on a single level. The site may be one that involves excavation, in which case the resulting semi-basement may be used for things like heating chambers, stacks and lecture halls. Alternatively lecture

halls can be put on a second floor. Modern examples of two-storied branches that have proved successful are the Norbury branch at Croydon, and the Sheepscar branch at Leeds described on page 126.

*Walls.*—Consider the abolition of solid dividing walls between departments, and their replacement with (a) glazed screens or (b) natural division by book-cases.

In view of the almost universal limitations on branch staffs, unnecessary movement and a maximum of supervision should be aimed at.

The adoption of (b) will facilitate the extension of a department should it become necessary, or permit of an easy change over. Moreover, walls cost money to erect.

*Windows.*—Consider in relation to the lay-out of the interior whether the conventional high windows shall be provided or whether floor to ceiling ones may not prove a better advertisement of the interior.

*Lay-out.*—Present-day trends in almost all walks of life are towards informality and comfort, and should be reflected in the lay-out of branches even if it is not so practicable in a central building. “Easy” chairs, tables, a few nice pictures, display racks and stands, attractive yet serviceable floor coverings, a few plants and flowers: these can make all the difference between just a public institution and the most used of all social service buildings. The day of the massive bookcase and the windsor chair has gone.

The service counter is too often such a massive and separating piece of furniture as to frighten and keep away would-be enquirers. Some think it is nearly as offending as the old indicator. The more general adoption of the Becontree idea of keeping the service point away from the book space has much to commend it. An assistant just sitting in the room at his work is not nearly so frightening as two or three in an "enclosure."

It should not be necessary to walk right across one room to gain access to another. The article in *The Architect* already referred to has a useful piece of advice that is worth quoting at this point. "The kind of building which will woo the people of Purley and its district might repel the people of Poplar. In one place the 'shop window' library may be necessary, in another it may be necessary to give a touch of the discreet gentility of an institution that is a bit aloof from ordinary things." It is to be hoped that this will not be construed as a note of snobbery; there is really something in it that we are apt to forget in copying something that a neighbour has got, and which may indeed be perfectly in place where it is, but not where it may be transplanted to.

*Shelving.*—A fundamental choice needs to be made: (a) between fixed and movable shelving and (b) between metal and wood. When it has been once determined, it is seldom that a library alters its shelf spacing, certainly in a branch. Personal choice will

decide as between wood and metal. My own preference, in common with that of some very successful designers of modern branches, is for wood, but others may think differently, and certainly metal shelving has improved in appearance and in colour range in recent years.

It should be determined at the beginning whether the floor is to be kept clear of book-cases or whether a combination of wall and island cases is to be adopted. The first method is more usual than the second, but here again opinions differ slightly, though the radiating idea seems to be falling rapidly into disuse because it takes up too much floor space.

The bottom shelves should be from fifteen to eighteen inches from the floor, tilted, and the books brought forward by means of a batten at the back. The average height should not exceed six feet, dust-holding cornices should be avoided—everywhere in fact—a back to front measurement of six inches is sufficient for fiction, with separate shelving for over-size books and music. Eight books to a foot is a convenient basis for estimating purposes.

*Floor Surfaces.*—Wood blocks, cork carpet, linoleum, rubber, and patent compositions all have their peculiar advantages and disadvantages. Certainly in one-roomed libraries and in reference rooms consideration should be given to sound-absorbing surfaces, and in general an easily cleaned surface is to be preferred.

*Heating.*—Besides the orthodox method of heating

by means of coke-fired boilers, oil, gas, and electricity present themselves to-day as clean, economical and automatically controlled methods, especially commendable in smallish buildings where coke storage and stoking labour offer difficulties. This matter has been discussed in detail on pages 48-49.

*Lighting.*—Except for point lighting on tables, if any, the lighting on the ground- or main-floor should be controllable from the staff counter, as too should electric fans.

*Car and Cycle Parking.*—The use of the car and the cycle, especially in suburban districts, should not be overlooked. Cycle storage accommodation should certainly be provided, and if space permits, car parking space will be appreciated, though naturally it should not be provided at the expense of the library building.

## CHAPTER III

### STAFFING

IN common with other aspects of library administration the staffing of branch libraries has greatly improved during recent years. Formerly it was an all too common practice to place at branch libraries any assistants who might be considered as scarcely good enough for the central library, and once placed there they were apt to be more or less forgotten save for the perpetuation of their names upon the salaries list. In some library systems, especially perhaps among the older ones, there yet lurks this danger, although to-day such staffs include members of recognized achievements or promise.

This last, indeed, is as it should be, for if there is to be any qualitative discrimination it should work in favour of the branches rather than against them, and the staff at a branch should be at least as well qualified as that at the central library. There is an obvious reason for this. At the central library there are, or should be, a fully qualified chief, deputy, and—in larger libraries at any rate—reference and lending librarians, all of whom will not only be Fellows of the Library Association, but will be expected to be fully alive to the possibility of keeping the library abreast of the far-reaching requirements of the social

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service, and who are well qualified by knowledge and experience to exploit the book-stock to the utmost advantage. In the central library the less experienced and less well-informed assistants can make immediate enquiry of them in cases of difficulty; but at a branch such resources are necessarily more restricted; there are fewer responsible officers and the staff should be the best that can be obtained. It is by the measure of its efficiency that the standard not only of the local branch but of the whole library system will largely be judged.

A branch library should be not only efficiently but adequately staffed. Generally speaking, few of our public libraries are really in this position and there is just a sufficiency to carry out the daily routine work, and but little more than occasional time for spasmodic excursions into such aspects of work as the maintenance of catalogue and staff records, guidance of readers, etc. But apart from the opportunity presented by this record of conditions for greater generosity in the numerical strength of branch staffs this is a factor which pertains to the general principles of library administration.

Even so, if anyone asks how many assistants a branch should have it must be replied frankly that it is a question that cannot be answered categorically. In a general way it may be suggested that the staff should always be large enough to permit of at least two being on duty at the same time. There may be exceptions

in very small libraries open perhaps only for a few hours daily, but a branch that justifies a whole-time library service also justifies the existence of an adequate staff. It is wrong to leave one assistant alone for prolonged periods: all his time will be occupied by keeping things running, and there will be neither time nor opportunity for individual assistance to readers.

Obviously it would be foolish to say that the number should be three, four, or five, or any larger figure, because local conditions must be the determining considerations. Some branches are made responsible for a particular part of library administration, *e.g.* the registration of borrowers, a share in the compilation of the library bulletin, or the supervision of a school library system. To a varying degree branches also give full routine treatment to their own new books, replacements and binding; the incidence of the busier borrowing periods enters into the question and there are many other factors involved.

Croydon may perhaps be taken as an example of reasonably, but not extravagantly, staffed branch libraries, the number of assistants ranging from four in the smallest to seven in the largest. The four-assistant libraries have no separate junior departments and accordingly have but one single counter to manage.

But if it is impossible to be very precise as to the number of assistants a branch should have, it is possible to be more specific as to their kind. In a four-assistant library there will most probably be a librarian-

in-charge, a senior assistant capable of taking charge in his absence, and two juniors. The weakness here lies in the lack of a children's assistant, but it should be possible to remedy this to some extent by having a senior with some knowledge of children's work. Five of the seven branch libraries in Croydon include an assistant who is specially qualified to deal with junior readers.

Whether a branch staff should be wholly male or female, or whether it should be a mixture of both, lies beyond the scope of this book to consider. Often the librarian-in-charge is a man, while his second-in-command is a woman, but as she is left in charge for some hours each day there can quite obviously be no serious reason why, if the library authority thinks fit, the librarian-in-charge should not be a woman.

#### STATUS OF BRANCH LIBRARIANS

It is likewise a little difficult to state dogmatically what is the precise position on the staff of a branch librarian. As there is a certain vagueness about staff nomenclature generally in libraries, an assistant librarian sometimes being synonymous with a deputy librarian, a sub-librarian sometimes indicating that same officer and sometimes denoting anyone occupying a charge position, so there is vagueness as to precisely what constitutes a branch library. Sometimes it is a large building as well equipped with departments and stocks

as many central libraries; more often it is definitely smaller and more restricted in its departments, but still a very creditable library unit, but sometimes it is a very small unit with only a few thousand books, hardly anything more than a book distribution centre.

It is obvious that with so many degrees of branches there must be similar differences in the professional standing of those in charge of them. Indeed, these differences are sometimes, though not always, reflected in their designation as assistant-in-charge, or as librarian-in-charge.

Whoever he or she may be, the position is an important, responsible and dignified one if the occupant is sufficiently alive to his opportunities. Besides a duty to his library authority and his chief, and his responsibility towards the public to which he ministers, he has an equal duty and responsibility to those who work under him. A keen librarian-in-charge can do much to engender enthusiasm among his staff: he can keep a closer watch on them than juniors sometimes get at a busy central library, and do much to kindle within them a high sense of the dignity of librarianship.

#### FLUID v. FIXED STAFFS

There are differences of opinion as to whether branch libraries should have fluid or fixed staffs. As far as those offering a whole-time service are concerned there is no doubt that the results are likely to be better

from a staff and from a public point of view if each has its own staff, with a compromise in favour of fairly frequent change in the case of juniors. Some branch librarians do not like these frequent changes, but there seems to be no very valid objection to giving a junior say three or four months at a branch followed by a similar period at the central library.

One of my colleagues to whom I referred this question expressed the opinion that three or four months was too short a time to benefit the assistant, who would not have the same interest if he—or she—knew he was to be moved in a few months' time; he—and especially she—would tend to become unsettled; the general work would suffer, and the public would not welcome such frequent changes of staff; they prefer the staff they get to know to the staff they do not know.

It should be remembered, however, that a chief librarian has a certain responsibility towards his junior staff, as indeed he has towards all of it, as well as to his authority, and he should see that as far as possible they are afforded reasonable opportunities for widening their experience.

The case is quite different with the librarian-in-charge, who it is assumed will have already had a sufficiency of all-round training to warrant his holding the post. Seniors, however, might with advantage to themselves and the system be changed round more frequently than they are as a rule.

One of the commonest complaints put into the

mouths of branch staffs, especially those of highly centralized library systems, concerns the lack of opportunities for practising such things as cataloguing and classification, though in point of fact not many people at the central library get opportunities for practising them either, for experience has shown that it is quicker and better in every way for the work to be done by a separate cataloguing staff.

There is only one way in which this can be remedied, and that is by giving assistants a turn in the cataloguing department from time to time, though frankly this is not as easy as it might seem.

To those beginners in librarianship who find themselves at a branch and feel rather in a backwater, let it be said in all sincerity that if they could only be wise enough to realize it, a branch is the very best part of a library system in which to get a thoroughly good general grounding in the foundations of librarianship up to the standard of, say, the Library Association's Elementary Examination. There is scarcely a phase of it, except possibly practical cataloguing, that does not come the way of a branch junior, extending from the arrangement of books to the assistance of readers in their quest for information.

Of course if a junior puts books in order every morning automatically without noticing what they are about or asking why they are arranged on the shelves in a particular order, does not make some sort of mental note of the many types of people who come

to the library and of their widely differing reading interests, does not make some definite contacts with at least a few of them, does not take some notice of the movements that are stirring the world and try to observe their repercussions on the library, the work must become dull and irksome. It would be just as irksome at the central library whether he was a junior or a chief librarian.

#### SUPERINTENDENT OF BRANCHES

There is one important officer who should be mentioned in this chapter—the superintendent of branches. Usually only the largest systems will have one, say those with upwards of a dozen libraries. He is necessary in such cases because the time of the chief and the deputy librarians must be almost wholly taken up with general administrative work; even so, one or other should make time to see something of what the branches are doing at frequent intervals. Apart from any question of duty it is a sign of recognition of the work being done in the sometimes outlying districts and is appreciated accordingly.

The objection to a superintendent of branches is that, as he is necessarily a mediary between the chief and the branch librarian, the latter may be deprived of regular direct approach to his chief, which is something to be regretted if it ever happens. Where the officer is necessarily appointed, however, he should

be a qualified librarian who has himself had charge of branch libraries, and so can see the point of view of those who run them better than one who knows nothing about their practical working through actual experience in them. His standing and remuneration should be something between those of a senior librarian-in-charge and the deputy librarian.

It is his job to see that the branches are administered in accordance with the policy laid down by the chief librarian, that they are maintained in good order, that the stock is kept abreast of the times in relation to the needs of each particular district, and that the branch is fulfilling its place as a link in the system. He must be inquisitive but tactful, impartial but keenly interested in all that he sees, fearless but just. Some reference to the duties of this officer is made in Chapter IV.

While it is imperative that each branch library should be, in reality as well as in name, a part of the system and not an isolated unit, the librarian-in-charge should be allowed as great a measure of freedom as possible, if, as is here assumed, the chief librarian has confidence that he is a sound and capable librarian who can be trusted to develop the branch along lines governing the system as a whole. He should have a part in the choice of books for his library, based upon an intimate knowledge of the tastes and interests of its borrowers. He should be allowed to organize book displays, lectures, musical evenings and wireless discussion



groups if such activities fall within the scope of the system's activities. He should make contacts with the schools, churches, societies, clubs, business establishments, and other institutions in his district.

However it may have been in the past it cannot be said that in the present age librarianship is a jealous profession, but there may yet be some librarians not altogether blameless in this matter, and progress may be retarded if librarians fail to agree among themselves or are unwilling to sink a little individuality for the well-being and better co-ordination of librarianship as a whole. The librarian who is so desirous that the limelight shall continuously fall upon himself that the branch librarian is carefully kept in the shade, produces the result that even the keenest assistants have their enthusiasm dulled and just carry on as automata rather than as living missionaries in the library world.

#### STAFF CO-OPERATION

Where individual enterprise is not stultified or definitely discouraged, there is often a keen rivalry between branches as to which can produce the best results. This is all to the good as long as it is carried out in a sportsmanlike and above-board spirit. In this as in everything else there should be co-operation between the librarians-in-charge, especially in cases where the areas served by two branches overlap, as they usually do. Friction and ill-feeling have been known to arise

between two librarians-in-charge because one, younger, less experienced and less tactful than his neighbour, has trespassed through a circular on the territory which his colleague regards as belonging to him, with a view to enticing the residents away from the library with which they have been hitherto identified. Of course it does not matter which library people use as long as they use one, but it is an example of the sort of thing that can be avoided with a little forethought and exchange of confidences between those concerned.

But not only must there be a certain amount of give and take between the officers in charge; the same spirit must extend throughout the staff of a branch. There is for instance the perennial subject of time sheets. At a central library it is usually possible to effect occasional exchanges between assistants; at a branch there are fewer numerical facilities for doing this. The librarian-in-charge and his senior will work opposite to each other during parts of every day, and so may the two juniors in a four-assistant branch. It will therefore make for smooth working and good teamwork if, from the librarian-in-charge downwards, there is a willingness to meet a colleague who may want to change his times for a tolerably good reason. If there is, as is hoped, a keen interest in professional meetings, there should be a willingness to share the opportunities for attending them. Naturally the librarian-in-charge has the prior claim in matters of this kind, but no leader has commanded the respect and

devotion of his subordinates by persistently asserting his "rights." One could cite cases within our personal recollection of excellent librarians-in-charge whose only fault was their constant inability to see the other person's point of view, and they have missed in consequence the spontaneous service they might have had.

Similar remarks might be made concerning holidays and, in a way, sickness. Indeed, a word or two may not be inappropriate in this last connexion. If an assistant falls sick at the central library there is usually someone to do his job; at a branch, however, sickness often means that a colleague has to perform extra duties and possibly work extra hours. Sickness cannot be avoided as a rule, and there is invariably genuine sympathy with a colleague who falls ill through no fault of his own. But it is our mutual duty to see to it that reasonable precautions are taken against illnesses that might possibly be avoided with a little forethought or prevision of the effects one's absence may have.

Perhaps this is also an appropriate place at which to say something more about time sheets. The principle will naturally be laid down by the chief librarian, and should, as far as possible, be similar throughout the system. There should be a standard time sheet, a copy of which should be in the hands of the chief librarian or his deputy for reference. Wholesale departure from this sheet should not be allowed except by permission of the chief librarian, but the librarian-in-charge should be authorized to make exchanges as

between one assistant and another for a specific purpose. Some branches have a bad practice of compiling time sheets from week to week; that practice is bad because it prevents assistants making engagements ahead, whether they are social, recreational, or educational. With limited staffs alterations are obviously necessary from time to time in consequence of holidays and sickness, but they should not be more frequent than the exigencies of the service require.

#### BRANCH SALARIES

Something needs to be said in this chapter about the salaries applicable to branch library staffs. Those of the seniors and juniors will presumably be governed by the scales in operation throughout the system. Nothing further need therefore be said in their connexion except to point out one difference in regard to the first—or only—senior assistant. It should be remembered that he or she is left in charge of the building during parts of every day, a responsibility that seems to deserve some recognition. There are instances where this is done by advancing such seniors Ten Pounds or so on the scale, a concession that might be more widely practised than it is.

There are, however, wide discrepancies in the salaries paid to branch librarians, and frequently they are far too low to attract men or women with the necessary qualifications or personalities. The *Report*

*on the hours, salaries, training and conditions of service in British municipal libraries*, issued by the Association of Assistant Librarians in 1932, had occasion to draw attention to these in a sentence that is worth quoting: "A strong plea is overdue for the higher grading of branch librarians. Assistants occupying this responsible position should always be fully qualified, as their duties entail considerable responsibility. Too often disinclination to pay reasonable salaries has led to the appointment of half-trained assistants who do considerable harm to the library service in their district. . . . Many authorities, incapable of assessing either the value or quality of their library service, have come to regard the senior assistant's work as merely clerical. It must always be remembered that the public who use only a branch library are wont to judge their district library service entirely by the treatment they themselves receive. If the central service is perfect and the branch service poor, inadequate, and neglected, then for users of the latter the entire library system is bad. It is a sound, economical policy, therefore, to insist that the Chief Librarian's representative at Branch Libraries should be thoroughly worthy of his responsible post, and paid according to his worth."

We have expressed similar sentiments in other words, but this official observation should give them added significance.

The Library Association in a series of *Recommendations . . . on salaries and conditions of service* issued

in 1934 says that "Assistants in charge of full-time branch libraries with a total staff of five or more . . . should be placed in Grade D of its recommended scale." This grade commences at £330 and proceeds by annual increments of £15 to £405 in the provinces as a general rule, at £345 rising by annual increments of £15 to £435 for large provincial authorities, and at £380 rising by annual increments of £20 to £500 in the case of local authorities "in the county of London and contiguous local authorities and similar local authorities to which the scale is applicable."

## CHAPTER IV

### RELATIONS WITH THE CENTRAL LIBRARY

THE existence of branch libraries presupposes that of a central library, a chief librarian, and librarians-in-charge of those branches. Between libraries and officers alike there must of necessity be a close relationship. The success or otherwise of the system will depend very largely on the cordiality of those relations, but cordiality does not preclude the discipline and leadership that are likewise necessary.

There are two extremes in the administration of a public library system: centralization and decentralization. In the first everything is controlled from a focal point, though certain operations need not necessarily be done at that point, which is of course the central library. For instance, the registration of borrowers is usually centralized, but the actual work can be done equally well at a branch provided there is the staff to do it without jeopardizing its public relations.

In very large systems, however, it is an advantage to have an administration department in which all work common to the system can itself be centralized: registration, the ordering of books and supplies, cataloguing and classifying, accessioning, and possibly even the more mechanical processes involved in preparing

books for use, if it results in their reaching the public with greater speed. The time-lag between buying a book and getting it to the reader is a serious weakness in many library systems.

Too little attention and far too little accommodation have been given to this important aspect of library work, with the result that it is often done in inconvenient places by people who have other duties to perform, and who can only give odd time to work that must make or mar the efficiency and up-to-dateness of the whole system.

But wherever it is done, it is essential that it shall be directed and co-ordinated by a single mind in the person of a chief librarian. Obviously, if he is a sensible chief he will ensure that there is close co-operation and real sympathy between himself at the centre and those who represent him at the branches.

Extreme decentralization exists where every library in a system is to any extent a law unto itself. Each librarian-in-charge does his own book selection without reference to similar work being done by his colleagues, his own ordering, cataloguing, and so forth. There have been cases where each local librarian has reported directly to the libraries committee, and several notable examples of this type of administration could easily be cited, but most of them have been abandoned as extravagant and generally unsatisfactory, and for very obvious reasons. The method is expensive, it involves unnecessary duplication, and it signally fails



to secure co-ordination, thus disorganizing the whole system.

May it, then, be assumed to be generally agreed that every branch serving a town or a city, or even so-called rural parts of a county, should be regarded as part of a system of which each unit works in harmony with the rest under a qualified, broad-minded, and sympathetic head?

To achieve all this it is essential that every branch in a system shall maintain close and regular contact with the central library, though it is equally vital that the central library shall maintain equally close contact with its branches and not regard itself as some superior hierarchy dominating a number of satellites.

Where the number of branches is large it may be physically impossible for the chief librarian to interview each librarian-in-charge individually every week, and when this stage is reached the appointment of a superintendent of branches should receive serious consideration.

It should be the duty of a librarian-in-charge to report to his chief at appointed times, say once a week, to pay in such cash as he has received for fines, etc., and be reimbursed for his petty-cash expenditures; to submit a formal report concerning the issues since his last report, the current activities of his library, the condition of its stock, and other details. In addition to routine matters such as these advantage should be taken of the opportunity to examine new books in the cata-

loguing room, to inspect any displays then being made, and discover what professional periodicals or other library "tools" have been received that do not come the way of the branches. It is, in fact, his great opportunity to keep himself informed of anything and everything he ought to know if he is to remain abreast of the library times.

It should be somebody's duty to visit the branch libraries at frequent intervals, and, as already indicated, in larger library systems this person is a whole-time branch superintendent. In medium systems this work will probably be undertaken by the deputy librarian, while in small libraries the chief may usefully undertake the task himself. But in any case, however large or small the number of his libraries may be, the chief librarian should make time to see all his branches several times during each year, for after all he is the officer responsible to the library authority.

#### SUPERINTENDENT OF BRANCHES

Where the appointment of a superintendent of branches is contemplated, it may be pointed out that he must be regarded as a liaison officer in all branch matters, including the planning of projected branches. His duties doubtless vary to some extent in different systems, but the following summary of them laid down by a very successful and progressive system will serve

to indicate both the wide field they cover and the kind of officer who is likely to carry them out tactfully, thoroughly and impartially. They are:

To devote the whole of his time to a regular and systematic supervision of branch and evening libraries in order to ensure efficiency in all matters relating to general routine, administration, and public service, and also to prevent wastage of material and personnel. Branch and evening librarians must carry out all instructions given by the superintendent for the furtherance of this object. It will be his duty to check periodically the working methods in operation at each library, in order to secure uniformity of routine administration.

*Binding.*—It will be his duty to examine all books withdrawn from circulation and determine what shall be forwarded to the Binder.

*Discards.*—He will also give instructions for withdrawn cards to be written out and forwarded to the City Librarian for all books which he may deem it advisable to discard or replace, and see that when the withdrawn cards have been returned to the library and recorded in the discard register, the books are sent direct to waste when instructions are received from the Administration Department.

To maintain general supervision of all book stocks and make recommendations to the City Librarian. This will include books in special demand and public proposals.

To arrange for co-operative library publicity and co-ordination of methods.

To encourage methods of book exchange between the various units.

To supervise school and other visits to the branches.

To arrange, in consultation with the Deputy City Librarian, any relief duties required.

To approve and initial requisition sheets for supplies of stationery and cleaning material before they are forwarded to the Administration Department.

To test annual stocktaking returns and all other official reports.

To check occasionally the hours of opening and closing, and caretakers' hours.

It will be necessary for him to be at his desk, for consultation purposes, on Fridays at the Central Library between the hours of 2.30 and 4.0.

To sign the time book at each branch library on arrival and departure, and the Administration Office departmental time book when present at the Central.

To submit daily reports on his activities. Any deviations from the official policy or failure to comply with the instructions laid down in the Staff Manual must be reported to the City Librarian.

To implement his enquiries two forms are used. The first contains, besides the name of the library or libraries visited, the date, time of arrival and departure, staff on duty, and a list of the twenty-five items to be checked:

- |                            |                             |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Issues and Record       | 14. Lost and damaged record |
| 2. Time book and Sheet     | 15. Repairs and dusting     |
| 3. Overdues book           | 16. Diaries                 |
| 4. Charging System         | 17. Cash                    |
| 5. Duplicate tickets index | 18. Periodicals             |
| 6. Defaulters' cards       | 19. Staff Instructions      |
| 7. Binding                 | 20. New Books and Service   |
| 8. Discards and records    | 21. Inventory Book          |
| 9. Accession Register      | 22. Public Proposals        |
| 10. Replacements Register  | 23. Publicity               |
| 11. Shelf Register         | 24. Outside activities      |
| 12. Catalogue              | 25. Borrowers' Register     |
| 13. Lost Property Book     |                             |

At the foot is a space for remarks on the above, and on the back spaces for further observations—on structure and fittings, caretaker's duties, staff, etc.

The complement to this is the superintendent's daily report sheet, upon which is entered the names of the libraries visited, times of arrival and departure, and the duties performed.

#### UNIFICATION OF METHODS

It should not be necessary to say that in a properly organized library system the administrative methods affecting the public will be precisely the same throughout. The younger generation does not always see eye-to-eye with its elders in this respect, and we occasionally hear about such things as "self expression" and "freedom of action"; but the fact is that matters of

routine do not lend themselves to variant interpretations and incalculable harm can be done if duties are permitted to be variously performed.

No reader should have reason to complain that he is allowed to do this or that at one library in a system, and is prohibited from so doing in another. If, for example, it is laid down that a book may not be renewed more than twice, that only non-fiction books may be borrowed on non-fiction tickets, that as a check against wrong "discharges" a borrower is to be asked to give his name before being passed through the barrier, or that only non-fiction may be bespoken, those instructions should be observed faithfully throughout the whole of the system. Awkward and inexcusable disputes with borrowers have arisen through inconsistencies like these.

Similar uniformity is also essential with regard to such administrative and routine work as does not directly affect the public. It is not necessary to labour the reasons why this must be so; they are perfectly apparent, and it is absolutely hopeless to have a co-ordinated service without it.

To ensure that the whole of the staff is conversant with the approved and considered method of dealing with a specific piece of work which might conceivably be done in several ways it is desirable that there should be a code of staff instructions. Great care must be exercised in the drafting of it to see that it is fool-proof and incapable of more than a single interpreta-

tion. It should be phrased in the imperative, and where forms are involved specimens should be included.

It has been implied that some young and inexperienced assistants may rebel secretly against regimentation of this kind, but as time passes they will realize that such is the only way to successful library work from the standpoint of administration. It is a requirement common to systems of every kind, and is, and must, be found in every successful library whether in England or elsewhere. When in America I was fortunate enough to secure at Baltimore a copy of the finest code of instructions I have ever seen.

In this connexion it may be suggested that much trouble will be saved, and some useful hints may result, if staff instructions in any way affecting branches are first circulated among the librarians-in-charge. There may be points which the drafter at the central library has missed, especially if he is himself unfamiliar with the difficulties which beset branch staffs.

Accidents, whether to readers or to members of the staff, expulsions from the library and similar happenings, should be reported at once to the chief librarian in writing, prefaced if sufficiently urgent by a telephonic communication. This is especially important in the case of accidents, in order that the authority's insurance company may be informed through the borough treasurer, or other appropriate officer, as early as possible, and so enable investigations as to liability to be instituted without loss of time.

## COMMITTEE RELATIONS

In addition to the close and good relations that should exist between the central library and its branches, matters are considerably helped if and when the committee takes a lively interest in the well-being of the libraries and the staff and their work. Naturally it will be informed from time to time of progress generally, but something a little more intimate is to be desired. At Manchester and Croydon, and perhaps elsewhere, there is a pleasant custom which might with advantage be more widely practised. On a Saturday afternoon in the early summer the Libraries Committee tours a section of the system, meets the librarians-in-charge and their staffs, partakes of tea at one of the branches with the heads of the staff, and so establishes useful contacts besides acquiring at first hand some knowledge of the system they govern.

Anything that assists to scotch the notion that the central library is "it," and the branches are not, is to be encouraged, and for such a purpose (as well as for smooth and efficient working in all directions) library staff councils are excellently designed. At fairly frequent intervals, though not so often as to make them mere matters of routine (say once a month), the chief librarian with his deputy will call together his superintendent of branches—if there be one—and his librarians-in-charge, and discuss with them projects for the improvements of the service: tell them some-

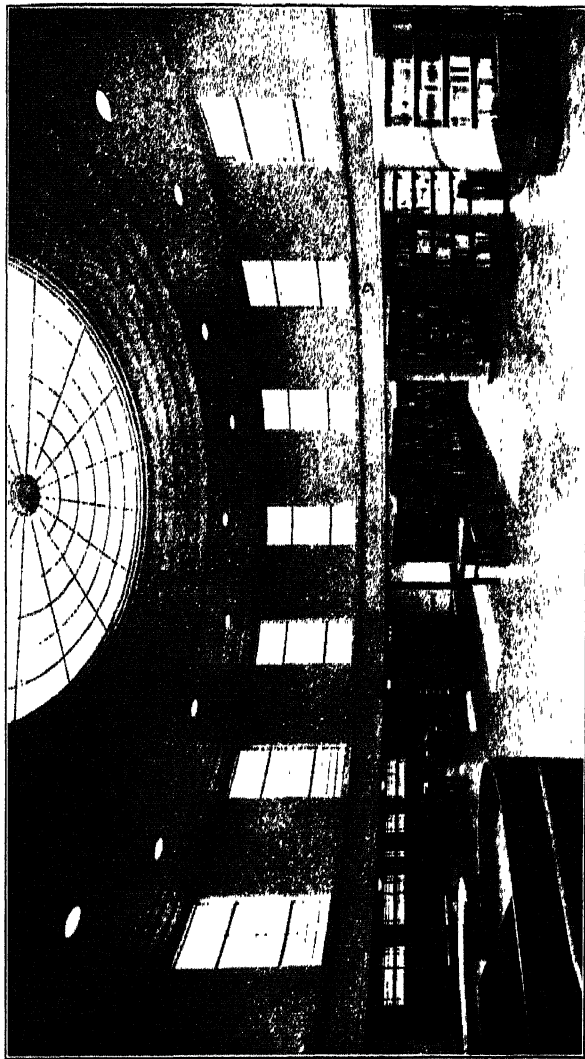


thing of matters decided at the last meeting of the libraries committee, and ascertain their reaction to such projects and deliberations. But such occasions should not be confined to things which the only chief librarian has in mind. The librarians-in-charge should be encouraged to bring forward suggestions for extending the usefulness of the libraries, for remedying weaknesses in the stock, effecting time-saving methods, and anything else that lends itself to useful discussion.

This sort of liaison can be continued throughout the staff. Assistants specializing in children's work should meet the children's librarian at the central library. They can examine and discuss the best books, compare plans for story hours and talks, recount experiences when visiting schools, consider projects for improving and extending their work, and other matters.

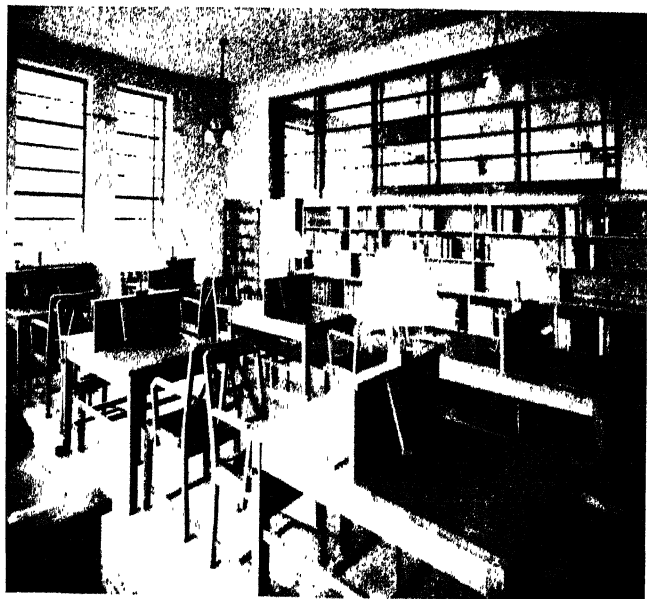
Staff guilds can also play a great part in linking up the staff in large library systems, and if the time-sheet makes other opportunities for such gatherings difficult much good may accrue from early morning or late evening meetings, social entertainments, and visits to places of professional interest.

The branch librarian should be on his guard against giving interviews to the press on matters of general library policy, on decisions of the committee or the council, and similar matters. There is only one person who is entitled or authorized to do this sort of thing, and such requests for information should be tactfully



ST. BARNABAS BRANCH, LEICESTER  
Lending Library

*[The Director]*



*[Chief Librarian, Nottingham]*  
ASPLEY BRANCH, NOTTINGHAM  
Exterior and Study

referred to the chief librarian. The branch librarian's own relations with the press should be restricted to information concerning purely branch activities, such as accounts of meetings that have been held, of displays or exhibitions that have been arranged, and similar matters.

#### FORMS AND RECORDS

Little can be usefully said about the forms and records appropriate to a branch library; they are for the most part precisely the same as those used in the central library. Each branch will keep its own petty cash and postage books, its time book and work book, its catalogue, stock and shelf registers, and all the rest. Some importance is attached to the work book, partly because it should be available if the chief librarian, the superintendent of branches or his equivalent asks to see it, as he should, and partly because it provides sufficient evidence of what the branch staff does with its time apart from issuing and receiving books.

Branch libraries should possess localized stationery for overdue notices and for routine correspondence, but it is better that other correspondence should be dealt with from the central library over the signature of the chief librarian, especially letters concerned with policy and with what may easily develop into serious and regrettable disputes with readers. Care should be taken, however, to see that the librarian-in-charge is

furnished with a copy of any letter sent out from the central library which may concern his branch, so that he may know what attitude to adopt in the quite likely event of the correspondent calling on him. There are few more things more annoying or more belittling to anyone in a responsible position than to learn of something that concerns him through a third party.

But there are at least two records peculiar to the branches. The first is the report form which is submitted to the chief librarian each week. It is an important document if properly compiled, for not only does it enable the chief librarian to see what his branches are doing, but it gives the branch librarian the satisfaction of being able to show his chief that he is making some real contribution to the work of the system; if he is not, there is either something wrong with himself or with the reading facilities existing at his branch. An idea of the information a report of this kind might furnish is indicated below.

It is desirable that such reports shall be made in writing; they are useful for reference, for purposes of comparison with similar reports from other branches in the system, and they provide data for the chief librarian's monthly or quarterly report to the committee.

The Croydon form is a somewhat elaborate document, but it is effective and contains provisions for most of the things a chief librarian wants to know, and should know. The particulars asked for are:

- (1) Number of new borrowers during the week.
- (2) Number of defaulters (*i.e.* borrowers who have failed to return their books in response to the usual overdue notices).
- (3) Number of queries (*i.e.* mistakes at the counter in the discharging of books mostly).
- (4) Library Talks and the attendances thereat.
- (5) Other meetings (such as lettings to societies).
- (6) Other activities (such as exhibitions, special book displays, etc.).
- (7) Events of unusual importance and interest (accidents, complaints, visitors, etc.).
- (8) Class by class issues for the week and for the corresponding week last year.
  - (a) Adult lending library.
  - (b) Adult reference library.
  - (c) Junior lending library.
  - (d) Junior reference library.
- (9) Daily averages and grand totals, this year and last.
- (10) Loans to other libraries (*i.e.* books lent to the central or to other branches in response to readers' requests).
- (11) Returns from other libraries (the books returned in connexion with 10, and books belonging to the branch exchanged at other libraries).
- (12) Remarks on repairs needed to the fabric of the building or to its furniture.

- (13) New books—
  - (a) Received from the central.
  - (b) Passed into circulation.
  - (c) In course of being processed.
- (14) Binding.
  - (a) Number of volumes dispatched.
  - (b) Number of volumes received back.
  - (c) Number of volumes awaiting binding.
- (15) Petty cash expenditure.
- (16) Cash receipts, grouped under heads as:
  - Fines.
  - Sales of publications.
  - Bespoken fees.
  - Lettings of rooms, etc.
- (17) Matters not included in the foregoing.

This may appear to be meticulous, but only by some such means can the chief librarian keep himself informed how things stand in his system on the one hand, and the branch librarian on the other do justice to himself for the work he has endeavoured to perform to the best of his ability.

The other form is concerned with the machinery involved in the inter-borrowing and return of books. The first essential here, however, is not a form but a telephone, preferably a series of private lines between the central and the branch libraries, thereby obviating the necessity for, and delay in, going through the public exchange each time.

Let us assume that Mrs. Nelson has borrowed a book from the Lavender Vale library, and finds it convenient to return it to the central library, because maybe she is shopping in its neighbourhood or is going to the pictures. She does not require another book but expects to receive some evidence of the return of her book.

The assistant will look inside the book and see that it belongs to the Lavender Vale branch. He will ring that branch, and use some such phrase as: "Please discharge for 23rd April 11378"—23rd April being the due date, and 23rd April being better than April 23 as it separates one set of figures from another and obviates possible confusion. The assistant at Lavender Vale will at once remove the charge from the issue and reply: "Your discharge for Nelson, N274.2." The assistant at the central library will ask for the ticket to be placed with other tickets of this suspense kind, give Mrs. Nelson a temporary ticket—we call it a white slip to distinguish it from a permanent ticket and from the pink slip referred to below. Presentation of this slip at any library in the system will entitle her to borrow a book, and it becomes the duty of the library at which the slip is presented to recover the permanent ticket. On page 86 is a sample of this slip.

If, however, Mrs. Nelson wants to borrow a book from the central library in exchange for the one belonging to Lavender Vale, the assistant will take a blank slip—we call it a pink slip, so giving it a name



- (13) New books—
  - (a) Received from the central.
  - (b) Passed into circulation.
  - (c) In course of being processed.
- (14) Binding.
  - (a) Number of volumes dispatched.
  - (b) Number of volumes received back.
  - (c) Number of volumes awaiting binding.
- (15) Petty cash expenditure.
- (16) Cash receipts, grouped under heads as:
  - Fines.
  - Sales of publications.
  - Bespoken fees.
  - Lettings of rooms, etc.
- (17) Matters not included in the foregoing.

This may appear to be meticulous, but only by some such means can the chief librarian keep himself informed how things stand in his system on the one hand, and the branch librarian on the other do justice to himself for the work he has endeavoured to perform to the best of his ability.

The other form is concerned with the machinery involved in the inter-borrowing and return of books. The first essential here, however, is not a form but a telephone, preferably a series of private lines between the central and the branch libraries, thereby obviating the necessity for, and delay in, going through the public exchange each time.

Let us assume that Mrs. Nelson has borrowed a book from the Lavender Vale library, and finds it convenient to return it to the central library, because maybe she is shopping in its neighbourhood or is going to the pictures. She does not require another book but expects to receive some evidence of the return of her book.

The assistant will look inside the book and see that it belongs to the Lavender Vale branch. He will ring that branch, and use some such phrase as: "Please discharge for 23rd April 11378"—23rd April being the due date, and 23rd April being better than April 23 as it separates one set of figures from another and obviates possible confusion. The assistant at Lavender Vale will at once remove the charge from the issue and reply: "Your discharge for Nelson, N274.2." The assistant at the central library will ask for the ticket to be placed with other tickets of this suspense kind, give Mrs. Nelson a temporary ticket—we call it a white slip to distinguish it from a permanent ticket and from the pink slip referred to below. Presentation of this slip at any library in the system will entitle her to borrow a book, and it becomes the duty of the library at which the slip is presented to recover the permanent ticket. On page 86 is a sample of this slip.

If, however, Mrs. Nelson wants to borrow a book from the central library in exchange for the one belonging to Lavender Vale, the assistant will take a blank slip—we call it a pink slip, so giving it a name

determined simply by its colour—write in the top left hand corner the initial of the library to which the book belongs and the name of the borrower, who is

### CROYDON PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Date .....

Your Ticket, No .....

is at the .....

Library. You can obtain a book at any of the Libraries, but only in exchange for this Voucher.

Please sign below.

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Discharged by .....

White slip

immediately allowed to pass into the library. The branch to which the book belongs is telephoned with a similar formula to that already cited, which in return communicates the ticket number, which is carried on to the slip, thus:

A 22 JUL. 38

MATTHEWS

M374.6

Pink-tinted slip

. It is important that the slip should be stamped with the date on which the book Mrs. Nelson has borrowed is due, so that in proper course the charge can be inserted in its correct place; failure to do this is a cause of inexcusable queries.

Every morning each library returns to every other library the books that have been returned on the previous day, and at the same time the tickets of those readers who have borrowed other books. The book-cards are taken from a pigeon-hole in which they were filed at the time of discharging, inserted in the books, the tickets replace the pink slips, and the charges are inserted in the issue.

#### REGISTRATION OF BORROWERS

It is fairly general practice for the registration of borrowers to be centralized, though—repeating what we have said elsewhere—it does not matter greatly where it is actually done. To facilitate the work, and to permit the immediate borrowing of a book, the assistant to whom a completed voucher is tendered will check it with the voters' list or local directory, or will accept other evidence of the guarantor's qualification, if such a signature is required for non-householders, as it still is in many libraries, and make out a temporary slip or ticket.

The vouchers are then usually indexed preparatory to filing, arranged alphabetically, and sent to the registration department at frequent intervals.

It will be found an economy in larger systems to employ a registration clerk—or clerks—who will see that applicants neither possess tickets already nor are blacklisted for fines previously incurred, or for failing to return books.

Some librarians do not attempt to prevent people taking out tickets at as many libraries as they like, but now that these are generally inter-available and the old severe restrictions on the number of books anyone may take are not so irksome, it seems wise to keep a check on the number of applications a person may lodge, though whether the considerable amount of work involved justifies the results, is very debatable, for after all, the number of citizens who deliberately try to abuse their privileges is very few, and those who do become known to the staff quickly enough.

It does, however, seem business-like to keep a blacklist of defaulting borrowers if only to let such people know that they cannot default with impunity. When a voucher is returned to the library of origin with a note of why it is not acceptable for registration, the borrower should be dealt with tactfully by a responsible assistant, who will soon sense whether the applicant is deliberately trying to shirk his responsibility or whether he has really “forgotten.”

Unpaid fines of a few pence, incurred perhaps years ago, can create more ill-feeling than they are worth, and the librarian-in-charge should be authorized to remit them in cases where he is satisfied that a real

hardship might result, or even where the borrower seems to have "forgotten."

In this connexion it will naturally be the duty of each library in the system to notify the registration department of stopped tickets, defaulting borrowers, lost books not paid for, etc., preferably on a simple form drawn up for the purpose, which can be filed in the borrowers' register. Similarly, tickets handed in to be cancelled should be stamped to that effect and sent to the registration department, as also should notes of changes of addresses.

A good deal is said in this book about that blessed word "co-ordination," but all of it seems to be necessary. From the public point of view perhaps the most visible sign of its existence will be found in the ease with which they may draw on the stock of the whole system.

To facilitate this, three things are necessary. The first is a telephone, the second is a union catalogue of the book stock, and the third is the daily delivery service between the libraries.

Union catalogues are bulky, expensive, and difficult to maintain with small finances and meagre staffs, and the difficulty is increased as new libraries are added to the system and as old books are discarded. Only those of us who have had experience of what are called "catalogue alterations" know how much work is in-

volved in the making of them, especially in a country that has no co-operative scheme of printed cards. But it is all very much worth while, if only from a staff point of view. Besides relieving the catalogue department or the central library of numerous enquiries, it supplies an immediate answer on the spot to the question, have the libraries this or that book?

It is not perhaps the function of a book of this limited scope to discuss how this may best be done. Much depends on the kind of catalogue in use, and while personally favouring the card catalogue, at any rate for the central library, there is a good deal to be said in favour of the sheaf catalogue for branches, provided the entries are limited to one a page. Copies are easily duplicated by some such process as the Ormig, and there is no need for the entries to be very elaborate: author, title, class number, and the location of copies are all that seem to be necessary.

Every large library system should possess its own motor delivery van, which makes a tour of it at least once a day, but smaller systems may find it more economical to get this work done by outside contract. In such instances a suitable car should be available for a stated number of hours daily, between times definitely fixed, preferably early in the morning, the contractor accepting, by an agreement drawn up by the town clerk, legal liability which may arise from loss, damage, or accident. At Croydon a light car is engaged for two hours daily at £2 16s. a week. Begin-

ning at the furthest branch of the system with nothing but what it may there pick up, it calls at each of the seven libraries in turn, leaving such books and supplies as may be consigned, and picking up consignments for any of the others. Ending the first half of its journey at the central library, the van then returns on its tracks, putting off and taking on as it proceeds.



## CHAPTER V

### BOOK SELECTION

OF all the problems with which a librarian has to deal that of book selection is fraught with the greatest number of difficulties, and as a general rule the smaller the library for which a selection has to be made the more difficult is the task of selection and rejection.

The stock at a branch library may be anything between, say, a thousand and thirty thousand volumes, but however large it is there will ever be many desirable works which cannot find a place upon its shelves. Of course the same restriction prevails, for that matter, even in the whole system, including the central library. There are some books—comparatively few—which should find a place in every library, but of others a single copy or a few copies at most, may serve for all needs. One policy endeavours to make the entire library stock as representative as possible by giving to a particular branch some book or books on a subject other than the specific volume which a reader requests, especially where the literature of a subject is prolific. This seems to be a good plan so far as it is practicable, but one factor has to be borne in mind. There are many subjects which have quite extensive literatures but only a single book that readers require more than any of the others, either because it is prescribed in

some examination syllabus or by extravagant publicity has been brought into the notice of a phenomenally large number of potential readers, or because of sheer merit has become a classic in its particular field. Care must therefore be taken to see that branch readers are not penalized by the application of a principle which is otherwise sound.

For these and other reasons it should be laid down as a fundamental rule that the entire home-reading stock of a system shall be at the disposal of readers in any and every part, certainly so far as non-fiction is concerned, and in newer branches such of the other standard fiction as is not contained in the branch stock should be just as freely available. The only exceptions permitted should be books that are really works of reference, and the newest fiction, and even the latter should be available to readers at any branch which does not possess a copy. One might, indeed, even say that every book in the library system should be available at any point but for the fact that each library probably has more than it can manage to keep its own readers supplied with the most popular works.

A warning may perhaps be sounded with reference to this common availability of the book stock of an entire library system. It does not preclude the necessity for the exercise of the utmost care in determining the actual stock of each branch, for while it may be a great asset for a reader to be able to draw upon some other library it is not *quite* so effective from the

specific reader's point of view as if the books so obtained were in his local library. Through unconsciousness of the master catalogues and of the facilities for the inter-lending of books, he may be unaware that the book desired is in any of the libraries. Of course he *ought* to know, but the fact remains that a large percentage of readers know nothing but what is actually and unmistakably in front of them.

It is difficult to discuss book selection as it affects branch libraries without entering upon a consideration of its general principles; in fact, it is almost impossible in view of the arguments already advanced that a branch should not be regarded as an isolated unit, but as a part of the entire library system.

And this must be my excuse for quoting from Mr. J. H. Wellard's interesting work, *Book Selection: its Principles and Practice*, the following seven questions, which may be asked by anyone who has in hand the process of book selection either for a branch or for a general library system. An honest attempt to answer them after careful investigation of the local conditions will do much to solve the selector's difficult task. The questions are these:

1. What proportion of the population of any given community uses the public library?
2. What social groups do these belong to?
3. What sources of reading are there in the community other than the public libraries?

4. What subjects are most read?
5. What subjects are of most interest?
6. What groups and individuals read what books?
7. What titles are most read, and by whom?

In Chapter I is discussed the question of small *versus* large libraries, and it seems desirable here to make some observations on the repercussions of size with regard to book selection. It is, I think, common experience that the larger the library the less will be the amount of money necessary to be spent upon the lighter forms of fiction and the higher will be the standard at which much of the book stock can be maintained. Contrariwise, the smaller the branch the larger will be the proportionate sum expended upon fiction, and it will be necessary to continue to spend considerable amounts if the issues are to be maintained. And unfortunately it is largely by the standard of mere size that our work is mostly judged.

Those who have had experience with newly established small branches will recall that it is the fiction shelves which have to be refilled again and again, and unless it be resolved from the beginning that its standard shall not fall below good literary quality the branch will rapidly sink to the level of many circulating libraries, with a non-fiction section thrown in. It is much the best course to multiply copies of the better fiction which most people want to read than to provide numerous titles by selection from some wholesaler's or retailer's list.

If it is not impossible it is at all events undesirable to attempt to lay down hard and fast rules as to the number of books a branch library should contain, or what books should predominate. If the librarian is competent he will have formed some idea when envisaging his branch policy as a whole whether a particular branch should have five, ten, or twenty thousand volumes, and what class of books shall have the strongest representation. The ultimate deciding factor is the use and demands the public makes of and upon the new amenity.

It is all very well for a librarian to decide to stock a branch library with, say, six thousand volumes, but if during the first weeks of its existence the public flock to it in such numbers that the shelves are practically denuded he must be prepared either to add more and more books until saturation point is reached or watch his library become derelict. Instances of this flocking to an unanticipated degree have happened more than once quite recently. Under these conditions the wise policy is to have sufficient courage to spend money upon strengthening the book stock until such time as the balance of readers between the older and the new branches is restored. The stock should be adequate and representative not only at a new branch but at the near-by older one also. In such a happy, though temporarily embarrassing, event the only sound policy is to increase the stock in the newly opened branch by two or even three thousand volumes,

and it should be done quickly for once the idea spreads that it is no use trying to borrow from a library because it either has no books or none that anyone desires to read, it becomes one of the most difficult of tasks to re-establish its prestige. "Just furniture" was the criticism of a would-be reader at a library in that unfortunate plight.

The bugbear here is, of course, financial stringency, but even where this necessarily prevails something may be done by a judicious transfer of stock either temporarily or permanently. There are often "live" books in good condition at the central or at branch libraries which may be available for such use, but under no circumstances should dead stock or soiled copies be weeded out and sent or the remedy would be worse than the disease.

Much is being said to-day about social surveys: a survey of that nature should be undertaken before the stock for a new branch library is purchased. To compile a buying-list of a large number of the "best books" or of works which are proclaimed to be those which "people ought to read" would assuredly involve a great waste of money, and with equal certainty would result in a stock of books which few of the population would desire to borrow.

No branch stock can safely be built up by any rule of thumb process—especially in these days of fast developing and new housing estates; and any pre-determined table of percentages of fiction and non-

fiction would be equally futile. The only common-sense and safe method is to ascertain so far as is possible the potential reading interests of the community to be served, and in doing so it is advisable to discover, *inter alia*, the preponderance, if any, of young prospective borrowers.

If the Croydon libraries may be cited again for evidence within the writer's knowledge, it may not be without value to state that there two branch libraries have recently been established on almost identical lines, both being of small size and of the single-room type. They were simultaneously built, and each was designed to contain an inaugural stock of about seven thousand volumes. One was placed in a better-class district, the other in an area definitely populated by the working class—if these conventionally convenient terms may be used without offence. In the former families were small; in the latter they were larger. In each of these libraries the room was so arranged that one long wall was occupied solely by children's books, the rest of the space was devoted to those for adults. It was soon found that in the middle-class district the shelves for adults were becoming denuded at an alarming rate, while those provided for the children remained tolerably full, whereas in the other branch a precisely opposite result occurred, and at an even more alarming rate. Here the children descended upon the books like a cloud of locusts, and the literally emptied shelves had to be replenished over and over

again. For some time many of the books had an issue of one a day.

Common-sense principles must be applied to the findings of this social survey idea. It may be found for instance that there is a predominance of practitioners in what are commonly known as the mechanic trades, like plumbers, bricklayers, plasterers, carpenters. This being so, it is sometimes urged that the branch serving that community should be more than usually strong in books dealing with these subjects, quite forgetful of the fact that a good plumber or a skilled bricklayer probably knows far more about plumbing and bricklaying than the writers of all the books put together. They will not want to spend their leisure reading about what they have practised day in and day out for years; they will prefer to turn their attention to their bit of garden, to understanding the intricacies of their radio sets; they may be amateur photographers, and would welcome some books that would help them to improve on last summer's efforts.

It may even be that the plumbing, the bricklaying, and the carpentry books will find a more appreciative public in the middle-class district, these things being among the many others that the sedentary worker loves to dabble in when he gets the opportunity.

Whether the initial stock is provided out of current revenue or by means of a loan does not greatly concern us here, but there is one important and controversial matter that does. This is the balance to be preserved



as between the best of the world's literature and the newest—the "best sellers," the issue-makers as these may be termed. Quite obviously no ordinary branch can house whole sets of the writings of the great figures in even English literature, nor is it necessary or desirable that they should attempt to do so if readers have the total book stock of the system at their disposal. Yet there should assuredly be some of these included in every local stock, and no readers should be deprived of the opportunity of reading at least a selection of the classics of literature because they are not included in the stock of the shelves at his particular branch. Even if such books should occasionally remain unborrowed for weeks at a time, they are still offering a useful service to the highest functions of librarianship.

To-day there is a plethora of channels through which just "something to read" may be had, but in many places the public library is the only medium from which the best books can be obtained. The librarian is therefore fully justified in selecting the basis of his stock from the masterpieces of all literature. Naturally he will not spend money upon books which have very little general appeal: it is the duty of the central library to be able to provide such works as and when they are required.

As to the lengths to which he should go in seeking to satisfy the popular appeal, that will mainly depend upon his own appreciation of literature and upon the funds at his disposal. Something should be done to

meet the current popular demand, but the effort must not be allowed to an extent that would be detrimental to other claims, and only the best of the inferior books should be purchased.

There is a saying to the effect that he who pays the piper may call the tune, which is sometimes cited by ratepayers and others who fail to find an adequate supply of books of the kind they personally want, quite forgetful of the fact that there are others with different tastes to be catered for besides themselves, and that they would themselves be the first to blame an official who failed to spend public money wisely and to the general advantage.

Briefly, then, it may be said that the stock of a branch should as far as possible be representative of the best literature of all kinds and grades and of all ages.

While it is obviously sound policy to centralize the work of book selection and book-buying for a library system, this need not be construed as indicating that a branch should be stocked with what the selectors at the central library choose to send it. On the contrary, the branch staffs should be not merely allowed, but definitely expected, to take a share in the book selection. Each week a live librarian-in-charge will bring to the chief librarian suggestion slips for those books which he thinks worthy of consideration as potential additions to the stock, and this not simply for his own branch but of the system as a whole.

There are various methods of book-buying in

libraries, but it is hardly within our province to discuss these in detail. Whether book lists are prepared monthly, whether batches of books are received on approval, or whether day-by-day orders are placed with booksellers, there should be an appropriate stage at which the branch librarian has an opportunity of indicating such books as he thinks would be acceptable additions to his stock—other, of course, than the obvious “all-round” books like a Wodehouse, a Walpole, a Wells, or a Shaw, or that small proportion of non-fiction that is quite obviously going to be a popular demand.

It is not an uncommon policy to allocate in the annual estimates a sum of money for the purchase of books for each individual library (and for other expenditures also), and to draft a monthly book-list upon which is indicated the branches for which the books are designed. These lists are usually examined in advance by branch librarians who suggest such alterations as may seem advisable to them in the light of their experience and local knowledge.

Recently, however, some libraries have modified this practice to an important extent by leaving the title-slips unmarked for libraries and allowing branch librarians to make their own allocations within the limits of the money available for expenditure during the month. This has proved successful because it not only gives them a more intimate share in the selection but it enables each library to get the books it wants.

As in all matters of administration the final word rests with the chief librarian, but unless there is good reason for differing the recommendations of the branch librarians are accepted.

Each branch is also generally required to maintain a register in which are entered particulars of such books as have been asked for and which the library has been unable to supply either from its own resources or those of the other libraries in the system. This register is submitted to the chief librarian at weekly or other intervals, and where circumstances are deemed to warrant such a course immediate purchase is made.

Of the assistance to be derived in supplying locally unstocked books from the National Central Library and the Regional Libraries it is not necessary here to expatiate. These are, of course, simply invaluable auxiliaries whose services are as available for branch libraries as for others, and their scope and methods have been admirably and fully explained by Colonel Newcombe in his *Library Co-operation in the British Isles*.<sup>1</sup>

#### REPLACEMENTS

The branch librarian should also be entrusted with a full share of responsibility in the matter of replacements and withdrawals from stock, for he is the one best qualified to judge whether a book is worth

<sup>1</sup> No. 3, Practical Library Handbooks. Allen & Unwin. 1937. 5s.

replacing in his library, whether the number of copies may safely be reduced, or even whether some books could not be usefully replaced by others on the same subject.

As a general rule, the replacement of branch books should be done with discretion and in collaboration with the chief librarian or other officer whose duty it is to co-ordinate the stocks of the entire system. To-day there may be urgent need for as many copies of certain books of the moment as the book fund permits, and of which every branch will require at least one copy, but preferably more. But by the time those copies begin to wear out the demand has probably subsided, and the numbers can be reduced in favour of new titles.

At the same time it may be desirable to retain somewhere in the system one or more copies. Unless the discarding—as distinct from temporary withdrawals—of books is properly and systematically supervised there is a danger on the one hand that too many copies may be kept in circulation, and on the other that the system may suddenly find itself with no copies at all of a book which has made a more or less permanent name for itself or for which enquiry may still be made from time to time.

Several casual references have been made to getting books to readers as quickly as possible after publication, a most important point on which so many public libraries fall short. To facilitate this the book selection

should be left by committees in the hands of the librarian as far as the current books of the moment are concerned, and the necessary processes should be carried out where and how they can be done most expeditiously. As a general rule this will probably be at the central library—at any rate, this is so wherever there is a well-equipped cataloguing department, as there should be in all large library systems.

In this connexion it is not even necessary in small systems to keep local accession registers. I have before me an admittedly rather elaborate but nevertheless very effective register, which besides the usual columns for number, class, author, title, publisher, source, price, etc., contains class columns and price columns for every library in the system. By adding up cumulatively the appropriate columns it is possible to tell at a glance the class by class stock of any of the five libraries and the amount of money spent on any or all of them. In the matter of stock, reference, lending, and junior figures are provided for separately.

By this means every batch of books bought can be accessioned forthwith as a single unit, every book in the system has a different stock and charging number, and a complete inventory of the whole system is ready to hand within a single sequence of loose-leaf binders.

The great difficulty in branch libraries, especially in the smaller branches that are becoming increasingly common, is to keep up a running supply of fresh stock. The obvious solution is a sufficiently large branch book

appropriation to enable plenty of books to be added continuously. But apart from the general absence of such appropriations, there is another difficulty here, especially in regard to non-fiction, in that not a lot of it has sufficient readers at one branch to wear out copies in such time as will enable room to be made for new stock.

Several methods have been attempted to overcome this difficulty, including the complete change over of the stocks of two similar libraries. Apart from the colossal amount of work involved in doing this, including the changing of the appropriate records, there is the practical objection that the books everybody wants to read will be included in the stock of both branches.

A better way it seems is some such plan as that recently devised by Mr. T. E. Callander at Coulsdon and Purley, described in the *Library Association Record* for June 1938 under the title "Mobilizing Stock in Municipal Branch Libraries." Briefly the idea is to substitute for the orthodox idea of allocating a book to, say, A, B, and C branches, to allocate all or some of the copies to what is called a "unit" collection which can perambulate the system, remaining at each library for three months. A travelling unit consists of a hundred books, and the machinery, to quote Mr Callander, is as follows:

"Each unit is given a distinguishing number, which is carried in bold red figures on the date label of the

individual books in each unit. During the fourth month it is called in, and at the end of four months the unit is returned complete to headquarters, where it is overhauled, individual books being repaired, rebound or replaced if necessary. The reconditioned unit is then sent off to a second branch for a further circulation period of three months, returning to headquarters every four months. One hundred books have been chosen as the number for a unit because, on the one hand, the arrival of a unit of this size at a branch makes an appreciable difference to the stock, while, on the other, the unit is small enough to be handled easily and quickly in transit and at headquarters.

“When a unit is assembled from existing stock, that is from books which have previously been permanently allocated to a library and have been accessioned and catalogued to show their permanent allocation, it is necessary to adapt existing records and to do this as easily and quickly as possible. The stock register, first, is corrected by stamping the entry for each book transferred to a unit with a rubber stamp saying, ‘This book is part of Unit No. 99.’ Statistics of stock are kept balanced by including the number of books transferred to units in the number of books withdrawn from stock, and then adding to the net stock figure the number of books added to units. . . .

“One or two refinements of the system may be mentioned. It has been found, in practice, that it is not always possible to find a hundred new books at



one time to start a new unit. In such a case, a unit is sent out as a quarter, half, or three-quarter unit for the first time. On its first transfer, it is made up to the full complement of a hundred books by the addition of such new books as are then available. Units may be made up according to the fancy of the librarian. Thus, one may try, by experiment, to find a standard recipe for the perfect unit, so many travel, so many biography, and so on in the hundred. One may make up all-fiction units, or special collections devoted to a particular subject, topical units and so on. The system seems, in fact, to be so flexible as to be readily adapted to suit local needs and tastes."

Schemes somewhat similar in general scope and purpose will perhaps be familiar in libraries elsewhere, for temporary deposits of books have "freshened up" the stock of branch libraries to good purpose in various library systems.

#### BRANCH REFERENCE LIBRARIES

A word about branch reference libraries may not be inappropriate here. Clearly no city or town can afford to maintain more than one reference library on a grand scale, and if it could it would be uneconomical to do so. The serious student and research worker must therefore visit the central library where special books and staff will be at his disposal, and he is almost invariably prepared to do so. But every branch

should contain a larger or smaller collection of live books capable of answering everyday questions—a good encyclopaedia, several atlases and gazetteers, dictionaries of quotations, a simple guide to legal matters, possibly a dictionary of medicine, a book of recipes, and similarly general works, including a fairly liberal selection of such invariably useful annuals as *Whitaker's Almanac* and *Who's Who*. The size of these collections will be governed by the size of the branch and the use made of it, its distance from the central library or some larger branch, the transport facilities between them, and other cognate considerations. It should be made known by means of notices that the branch is in telephonic communication with the central reference library, and that as far as possible answers to questions will be supplied by these means, and much needless expenditure can in this way be avoided.

The practice of sending old editions of reference books, and of obsolete lending books, too, alas! is not to be commended, and why a work which is out of date for one library should be deemed good enough for another has never yet been satisfactorily explained. Old law, old technical books, old statistics, old addresses and the like are all annoying, unsatisfying, and dangerous. It is far better to retain at a branch a small stock of up-to-date information than a roomful of obsolete or obsolescent information.

In the greater cities there are here and there larger reference collections, but these do not in any way

rival those at the central library, being equipped only with sufficient books to meet the needs of the ordinary student. They are, in effect, something rather more than just a quick reference collection, and it seems unjustifiable that anything more should be attempted since for special research the central reference library can be the only one in which comprehensiveness is possible.

Where small rooms are set aside in branches for reference books, and the shelves are cluttered up with obsolete directories and old encyclopaedias, the idea put forward by Mr. E. A. Savage in *The Library World* for April 1938, in a most refreshing article entitled "The Small Reference Library," deserves most careful consideration. It is largely a plea for the provision of accommodation, which at Croydon branch libraries is known as a "Room for Quiet Reading." There is abroad an altogether erroneous idea that books for reference use must of necessity be large, heavy, and expensive. Assuming that there is a reasonable supply of quick-reference material there is no reason why the rest of the shelving should not be filled with authoritative and readable editions of the poets, and even with a selection of fiction of undoubtedly classical rank. There is, of course, the risk of loss if small volumes are left lying around, but that is a matter of staff organization, vigilance, and tact. Experience has shown that the actual losses by misappropriation are by no means so large as might reasonably be feared.

Fortunately it is less necessary now than it was in the "far-off unhappy days" of the penny rate, but it may yet be desirable to emphasize the desirability of providing comfortable furnishing for readers. The fact that the public respond to such consideration is established beyond controversy, and the matter is as urgent at a branch as at the central library. The more attractive branch libraries become as social centres the greater will be their usefulness, and the more they are patronized the more they will be esteemed—provided that they are soundly planned, properly equipped and maintained, and are effectively staffed.

## CHAPTER VI

### COUNTY BRANCH LIBRARIES

BRANCH libraries are rapidly assuming more and more importance in the county library schemes, as can be seen by reference to the professional journals, which from time to time contain descriptions of new and very creditable branch county libraries. So much is this the case that it is high time we municipal librarians revised our notions of what we conceive a county library system to be, for too many of us have still the idea that it is a scheme of book boxes housed in village halls, schools and other more or less inconvenient places.

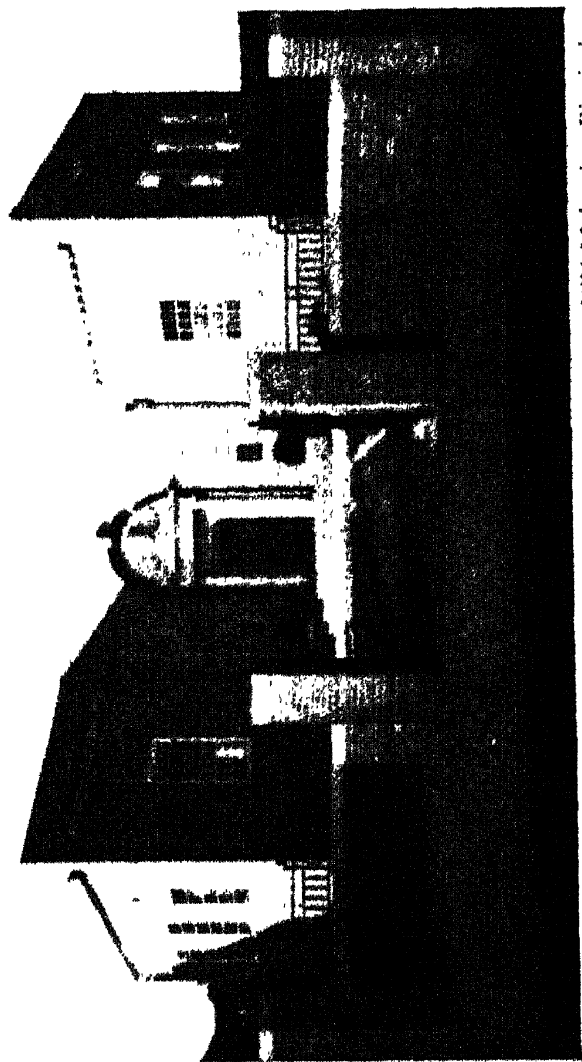
For the most part these branches are similar to those serving the outlying districts of cities and independent boroughs, but sometimes they will act as regional centres of the sort referred to in Chapter II, exercising a supervision over a certain number of surrounding villages.

Derby is a case where regional libraries have been developed successfully in connexion with a County scheme. The county has been divided into five regions, each with its own "miniature county library with a large regional branch library in a populous area as its centre. From this library, manned by a trained staff, books are distributed to about fifty small centres, and



*[Chief Librarian, Liverpool]*

THE HENRY A. COLE BRANCH, LIVERPOOL  
Young People's Department



THE YARDLEY WOOD BRANCH. BIRMINGHAM

*(Chief Librarian, Birmingham)*

the work of these centres is under the close supervision of the regional staff. . . . Quarterly conferences of the branch library staffs are held at each branch in turn, when mutual problems are discussed and suggestions received by the county librarian." (L.A. *Survey of Libraries*.)

The ideal in county branches seems to be to ensure that residents in developed areas shall not have to go more than a single mile to secure a whole time library centre. This is made practicable because the librarian who originated the idea has ignored administrative boundaries on the ground that the branches form part of the county system, and can therefore be made available to all and sundry irrespective of local artificial boundaries.

In its application to county libraries the term "branch" is sometimes misapplied to those distributing centres and deposit stations in small towns and villages to which reference has just been made. Strictly and correctly it is a properly equipped and well-stocked library like hundreds of other orthodox branches, open for a considerable number of hours each day, presided over by a qualified paid branch librarian and assistants, administered on modern lines and linked up with the county headquarters. These branches are generally established under a differential rating system which entitles the citizens to a measure of service over and above that ordinarily given to smaller communities. This is not invariably so, how-



ever, and there is, in fact, a growing tendency to abolish the practice of differential rating.

Such a branch may serve any range of population from five to fifty thousand, and is a vast improvement on the days prior to the operation of the 1919 Libraries Act, when many small authorities provided a library service which they were unable to maintain adequately without outside aid, not then forthcoming, but which is now afforded by the county headquarters, or alternatively they had failed to make any library provision at all.

The service provided in a county branch varies according to the size and population of the community to be served: the essential features are lending departments and reference or study rooms, to which may be added separate children's rooms, newspaper or reading rooms, meeting rooms for things like adult education classes, listening groups, and even museums.

The branch is administered by a local committee which becomes a sub-committee of the county library committee rather than a committee of the local authority. It will consist partly of members of the urban district or borough council, with a sprinkling of qualified co-opted members, and some members of the county council, preferably those possessing local knowledge and interests.

The Director of Education and the County Librarian retain the right to attend all committee meetings, and

the branch librarian or the clerk to the local council should act as the committee's secretary.

The committee will devote its attention to matters affecting the well-being of the branch, including the approval of estimates, staff appointments, approval of plans, regulation of hours of opening, and so on. In reality, it is only a recommending committee, but if it functions efficiently the county council will take considerable cognizance of its findings.

It will be clear that the librarian and his staff are not officers of the local authority but of the county council, and therefore subordinate to the county librarian. Naturally they owe a certain loyalty to the local authority and its policy, but in the unlikely event of a conflict of opinions, the decisions of the county council must prevail.

In general, the conditions applicable to other library appointments will apply to the staffs of county branch libraries. The branch librarian will be a Fellow or an Associate of the Library Association, and juniors should possess the initial educational qualifications laid down by the Association. Failure to observe these conditions is likely to lead to blind-alley occupations. In certain circumstances part-time appointments may be recommended, but they should not be widely or unnecessarily encouraged.

With regard to finances, it has been said already that branch county libraries are often maintained by a system of differential rating, the meaning of which is

sufficiently clear to render further explanation superfluous. But what is not always appreciated is the fact that not all of the expenditure on a county branch necessarily comes out of this increased local rate. Books for instance should be a charge on the general fund, as their provision is the first object of a county scheme and would have to be provided anyhow, but things like rent, loan charges, salaries, heating, lighting and cleaning, newspapers and periodicals, furniture and fittings are reasonably chargeable to the local rate as representing things provided for the exclusive benefit of a specific section of the county council. But there are variant practices governing certain items in different counties, and on the whole the tendency seems to be to meet as much of the expenditure as possible out of the general county library rate, including fittings.

Everything that is said in Chapter III about improving the status and remuneration of branch librarians applies still more to librarians-in-charge of county branches. An examination of a number of advertisements shows that the average salary offered is £154, for which the person appointed must be qualified to administer to the reading needs of towns of many thousands of people.

When it is remembered that a county branch is likely to be a long way from the county headquarters, that the librarian-in-charge has to stand on his or her "own feet," that in the eyes of the people who use the library he or she is *the* librarian, that he is vir-

tually responsible for filling the reading needs of those thousands of people, for trying to raise its level, for making all the contacts an urban branch librarian is expected to make, the average is obviously less than will attract the best available material.

He should have under him a qualified senior who can supervise the routine work and so leave him free to do all those things that he is theoretically supposed to do.

In some counties there has been in the last year or two a commendable change of attitude towards the provision of buildings suitable for branch county libraries. Adapted buildings are seldom desirable for anything but the purpose for which they were originally built. Counties like Middlesex, Derbyshire, and Kent—and others—have set very commendable examples of the sort of buildings required for an efficient branch library service.

It would be easy to elaborate on this aspect of branch library work to a considerable extent, but those who are interested in it will naturally and rightly turn to the *County Libraries Manual* (Library Association, 1935), where every aspect of it is fully and authoritatively dealt with.

## APPENDIX I

### EXAMPLES OF MODERN BRANCHES

It has been pointed out that the professional and architectural journals contain many examples of modern branch libraries of various sizes and costing widely different sums of money. For convenience, and to give some sort of idea of present-day trends, the following short descriptions are given of a few good examples of different types.

Authorities with branch schemes in hand might with advantage visit a few new libraries, not necessarily with the idea of transporting somebody else's ideas bodily to a district that they might or might not suit, but in order actually to see what is being done, and possibly, in some cases, what to avoid.

## ASPLEY BRANCH, NOTTINGHAM

Somewhat smaller than the Yardley Wood Branch is this one at Nottingham, the Aspley Branch. It cost £9,924, of which £8,742 was for the buildings and the laying out of the grounds, and £1,182 for furniture. It occupies about 2,000 square yards, has a lending library  $45 \times 40$  feet, a reading room  $40 \times 25$ , a junior library  $30 \times 25$ , and a study  $25 \times 20$ , with staff and work rooms in addition. A garden extends round three sides of the building.

Some of its features include: a strip-lighted show case in the entrance hall and a stand for directories, time-tables and quick reference books. The reading room has news stands round three sides, giving accommodation for 20 papers and space for 36 magazine readers.

The lending library houses 7,500 volumes, the maximum height of the cases being 6 feet from the floor. Tables and chairs are provided to permit of leisurely consultation of books, which suggests one of the greater changes that has come over the planning of lending libraries, the old idea being to get people in and out as quickly as possible. Besides good lighting on all sides there is a domed top light, and a horseshoe shaped counter controls entrance to all the departments.

The junior library contains 2,500 volumes, occupies a corner of the building, and has two entrances. It

is shelved on three sides, with work desks on the other for those who want to do homework in the room, which is planned so that it can be adapted for talks and the projection of educational films.

The study is a feature of the branch, fitted with individual table space for 18 readers, and stocked with the usual reference books and a selection of general textbooks.

## MITCHAM ROAD AND SHIRLEY BRANCHES, CROYDON

Either of two branches recently erected in Croydon provide good examples of the sort of branch which offers an adequate service for the time being while the building-up process of the district around is being completed, but which it is recognized must be extended in two or three years' time, the site being sufficiently large to take a separate reading room, a children's library (which can serve as a lecture hall in the evenings), and a stack room.

As a beginning, however, there is a lending library, 36 × 36 feet, shelves round the four walls, one of which is reserved for junior books, leaving the floor free for two display stands, the catalogue, round and rectangular tables at which the periodicals provided may be read.

In addition to this principal room there is a small newsroom, actually a part of the entrance hall, but more or less separated from it by a wall with openings on either side. Here about ten newspapers are displayed on stands at which readers may sit.

A small reference alcove is also provided, and two small but comfortable staff rooms.

The contractor's price for one of these buildings was £2,679, to which was added about £210 for expenses incurred in connexion with the preparation of quantities, wages, printing, paving and fencing works. The building is constructed of timber framing,



with steel supports for the roof trusses. The walls are covered externally with "Insulwood" and cement rendering, which is waterproofed, and the finishing coat is of coloured cement.

Internally, the walls are covered with "Fyburstone" Boarding, and the ceiling with  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch thickness composition boarding. It was erected out of a loan, and separate short-term loans were also used for books (£500) and for furniture (£200). So that for £3,590 a service was provided which in the first nine months has yielded an issue of 166,235 books.

In one of these branches an additional £400 was spent on the installation of an electric thermal storage system for heating purposes, thermostatically controlled.

The estimate for the first full year's working is £1,596, of which the principal items are: Salaries and wages, £685; Books and periodicals, £310; Loan charges, £360; Lighting and heating, £60; Rates and insurance, £50.

BECONTREE BRANCH, DAGENHAM

The £5,000 branch may be well represented by the Becontree branch at Dagenham. It is an example of the open library in the literal sense by the provision of an extensive glass façade of the modern industrial building type. The actual cost was £5,200, exclusive of the cost of the site, which was not charged against the library, and about £2,000 capital charge for books. Contrary to modern practice, it was erected out of revenue and had not constituted a capital charge.

It comprises a single room 100 × 30 feet wide, divided by a glazed circular clearance room and general entrance, with the usual staff offices, etc.

It houses 12,000 volumes and has accommodation for reading and reference work for adults and for children, the latter including facilities for Story Hours, small lectures and meetings, film shows, epidiastope and lantern displays, etc. A commendable feature is that the surrounding ground includes a children's garden for Story Hours in fine weather.

The estimate for running the branch during its first year is:

				£
Repairs and Maintenance	..	..	..	10
Heating, Lighting and Water	..	..	..	205
Cleaning (Wages and materials)	..	..	..	200
Rates and Insurance	..	..	..	100
Gardening	..	..	..	25

Dagenham is one of the library authorities that believes in keeping its buildings attractive, for it is estimated that £150 will be spent on repainting each branch every three years.

## ST. BARNABAS BRANCH, LEICESTER

A good example of the more expensive branch is the St. Barnabas branch at Leicester, designed to serve a population of 35,000 people, the building and furnishing of which cost £19,895.

It contains an entrance hall leading to a circular lending library 55 feet across, stocked with some 10,000 books, including a small reference collection, a combined reading and newspaper room  $53 \times 30$ , a junior library  $58 \times 30$ , containing about 4,000 books, with facilities for reading in the room, and separate rooms for students, staff and storage.

The low pressure hot water heating system, with radiators incorporated in the shelving and other fittings, is stimulated by an electric pump, and is thermostatically controlled.

The issues from the branch during its first nine months amounted to 206,923.

## SHEEPSCAR BRANCH, LEEDS

A Leeds branch recently opened known as the Sheepscar is a good example of the £10,000 species, the actual contract price being £10,580, excluding an additional £1,000 for the Joseph Porton room, the total cost, including architect's and clerk of works fee, being £11,586—1s. 5½d. per cubic foot.

It stands on a site of 675 square yards, of which 615 are occupied by the actual building. It is one of the comparatively few modern two-storey branch library buildings, a course made necessary here by the limitations of the available site.

The obvious objection to two storied buildings is to be found in the difficulty of securing adequate service and supervision with the limited number of assistants allocated to most branches. This has been minimized in the present instance by combining the adult and junior lending libraries on the ground floor in a single room. On this floor are also the staff work and rest rooms. The first floor is reserved for a reading room and for what is known as the Joseph Porton room, which contains an important collection of Jewish literature presented to the city, in itself an unusual feature in a branch library.

A spacious entrance hall—a desirable provision in any branch—gives access to the lending and the junior libraries, which are administered from a single counter, and occupy an area of 2,750 square feet.

The junior section is separated from the adult by the use of alcove book-cases, making it to all intents and purposes a separate department.

The windows are a noteworthy feature of this branch. Instead of being high up over the book-cases, they are low, permitting passers-by to see what the inside of the library really looks like. What better advertisement could an attractively planned library need than to let itself be seen?

This idea necessitates a breaking up of the continuous run of shelving which is a common feature of modern planning. There is undoubtedly a psychological as well as an aesthetic value in breaking up a collection of books in this way where space permits.

But, as Mr. J. T. Gillett, superintendent of branch libraries at Leeds, has explained in his descriptive article (*Library Association Record*, August 1938): "Owing to the amount of shelving required in large libraries, such an arrangement is possible only in libraries carrying small stocks. The best alternative is the combined use of wall and alcove cases, and this has been done at Sheepscar in such a way that the four alcove cases divide up the room into sections, each sufficiently large to accommodate display and reading tables, thus achieving a spaciousness which would not have been possible had island cases been used. The total shelving capacity of the adult and lending sections is 7,000 volumes, or about 60 per cent of the total stock. Counts of books on issue show

that in Leeds over 40 per cent of the stocks of all lending libraries is always on issue; another 5 to 10 per cent is always binding or awaiting replacement, so that shelving for 60 per cent is more than ample."

Seats have been provided under three of the low windows, so providing not only additional seating accommodation but adding materially to the attractiveness of the room.

Prominence has been given to display accommodation in both the adult and the junior sections. Book-cases are 6 feet 6 inches high for adults and 5 feet 6 inches for juniors, with the bottom shelves raised 18 inches from the floor.

The present-day attempt to avoid making the service counter a separating gulf between readers and staff has been introduced by giving it open ends and dispensing with wicket gates.

The informal theme has been extended to the reading room covering 1,275 square feet by providing four round and four square tables, with seating accommodation at the news-slopes.

Besides decent workroom and staff accommodation there is what is often omitted from branch buildings—reserve shelving for 2,500 volumes. Heating is secured with the invisible panel system by means of thermostatically-controlled gas-fired boiler. Unsightly and dirt-creating radiators are thereby eliminated to the increase of cleanliness and potential shelving accommodation.

Instead of decorating—if one may call most library distempering decorating—the rooms throughout in the same colour, each has been given individual treatment. Nobody would dream of using the same wall colour schemes throughout his own home, so why treat libraries otherwise? The cork flooring has also been laid in varying patterns. There are obvious psychological advantages in meting out differing treatments.

It is estimated that the annual issues from this branch will reach 300,000 or more. The cost of maintenance for a year is £2,500, excluding loan charges.



## YARDLEY WOOD BRANCH, BIRMINGHAM

As an example of the larger branch, Yardley Wood at Birmingham may be cited. It is interesting, too, for its unusual lay-out, being of the staggered order, to use an ugly modern word. It was built to serve a large and comparatively new population, and is the result of experience gathered during ten years' experimentation with several similar buildings.

The objects kept in mind were rapid service, perfect supervision, and economy. The focal point is the central staff enclosure at which *everyone* returns and receives their books. From it every point of every room is under direct supervision, while the enclosure itself is in turn under the eye of the librarian's office. All this supervision is made possible by the judicious use of glazed partitions between the rooms.

From a diamond-shaped entrance-hall there is direct access to separate news and magazine rooms, and through the staff enclosure to the lending library and the junior library.

The stock is larger than that in the average branch, consisting at present of thirty thousand books for adults and five thousand for children, but the rooms are sufficiently large to accommodate more book-cases when the necessity arises.

It cost £13,750, inclusive of furniture, fittings and professional charges.

During the year 1937-38 the library issued nearly 180,000 volumes, a daily average of 584. A very wide and important road is to be made in front of the library, and there is no doubt that when this is done these figures will be greatly increased. At present the building is in a *cul-de-sac* which is not even paved properly.

The annual cost of maintenance is about £2,500. Loan charges are additional.

## APPENDIX II

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